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Chronicles

A MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN CULTURE

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ATTIC GRACE

The Classical Mind in America

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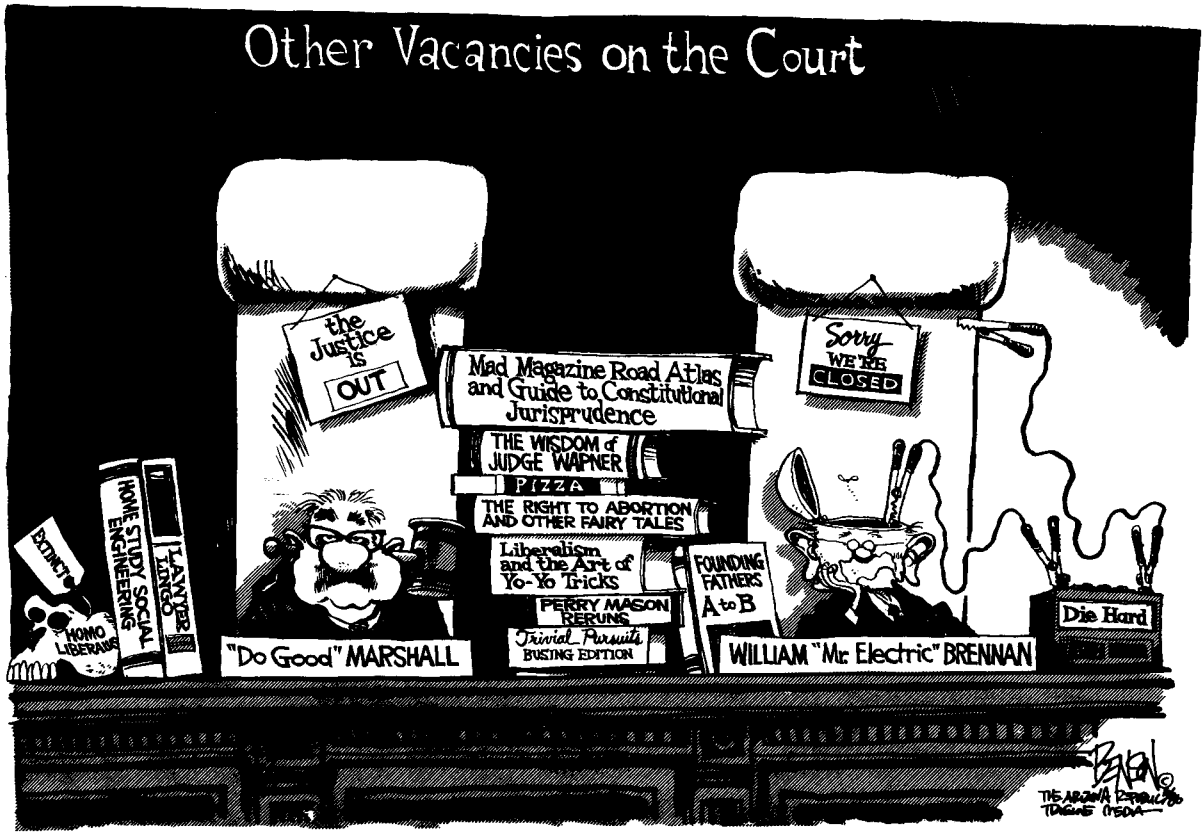
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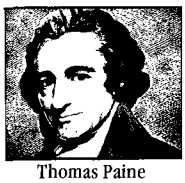
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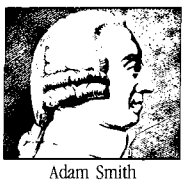
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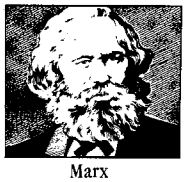
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A MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN CULTURE

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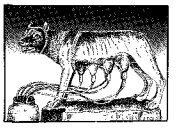

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On the Cover

Illustration on the cover and throughout the text by Zbigniew and Emilia Fitz.

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School busing is back in the news. But this time around the problem is with the drivers. At issue is the "right" of female bus drivers to drive the children of Hasidic Jews to school in Monroe, New York. When Hasidic leaders objected to women drivers as a violation of their religious beliefs, the ladies filed a grievance and won an arbitration ruling in 1984 in their favor. But round two went to the Hasidim, who secured a temporary restraining order from the state courts. In round three, the women drivers filed a civil rights action in Federal court, on which a decision is still pending. In the meantime, the temporary restraining order has lapsed. Even though the school district has offered to make up the pay difference for the three women involved if they will accept shorter non-Hasidic routes, the women drivers and their union prefer to watch the 600 Hasidic students walk up to three miles to school. That's showing 'em.

It is hard to tell where the Federal courts will come down on this one. The Supreme Court has already determined in the widely publicized Bob Jones University case that racial equality constitutes an "overriding interest" that permits the government to restrict the religious freedom of schools that do not comply with Federal antidiscrimination regulations. Perhaps the Federal courts will use the Monroe case to broaden this line of thought by making it applicable to equality between the sexes. If so, we might eventually see the government withdraw tax-exempt status from churches that preserve the biblical institution of father leadership in the home and bar female ordinations in the church. It will be a big, not to say strange, political bed that holds Fundamentalists, many Lutherans, Mormons, and Hasidic Jews together in alliance.

For the Hasidim, however, there is a ray of hope. In contemporary America, claims to religious freedom are more likely to receive a sympathetic hearing when they come from Orthodox Jews than when they come from Fundamentalist Christians. After all, no one fears being called "anti-Fundamentalist," but few epithets sting like that of "anti-Semite." The politicians sitting on the Federal bench will just have to choose whatever is the lesser of two evils: anti-Semitism or sexism. It's a Hobson's choice we'd wish only on a Federal judge.

Chinese students recently surprised the authorities when they began staging demonstrations in Kunming and Shanghai for broader democracy. A medical student listed his aims for a *Time* reporter: "Freedom of expression, freedom of the press, publication, and association." Another demonstrator put the matter more simply: "We simply want to have the freedom to do what we want."

Chinese leaders should not have been so shocked by this development. After all, it was *they* who introduced new profit-motive reforms into Chinese economy in 1984. Of course, these highly successful economic reforms were not supposed to disturb the basic political order. But as British historian Paul Johnson argues in *On Freedom*, it is folly to suppose "that one can distinguish between political and economic freedom." "Once freedom of trade is acquired by large numbers of individuals . . . free political institutions also emerge quite rapidly . . . the expansion of economic freedom . . . was also the progenitor of parliamentary democracy and

In the forthcoming issue of *Chronicles*:

Manufacturing Opinions

"What leaders want in their parties is a dogmatic relativism, a sense of superior wisdom that by abandoning (verbally) all claim to truth is spared the rigors of self-examination."

—from "Having Opinions" by Stephen R.L. Clark

ALSO

Thomas Molnar on universities

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universal suffrage." Or as one serious China-watcher said at the time the economic reforms were first introduced: "You start catching communist mice with capitalist cats, and soon the cats will be pretty big." Now, it appears, the cat is out of the bag. (BC)

President Reagan's New Year's Day address to the peoples of the Soviet Union eventually got read, in translation, over the airwaves, but the Soviet government's refusal to broadcast Mr. Reagan's appeal was seen by many Americans as one more sign that Mr. Gorbachev will be carrying on business as usual. On the other hand, the head of one state (no matter how friendly) has no right to deal directly, in any way, with the citizens of another nation. Legitimate regimes speak for their nations and ought not tolerate the unlicensed diplomacy of private citizens or foreign politicians. (A Russian Jesse Jackson would be brought to heel immediately, and rightly so.) Of course, in a war against a government we choose to regard as illegitimate (e.g., Nazi Germany), we frequently appeal directly to the people to throw off their tyrannical masters. If the USSR is really the evil empire the President has declared it to be, then he is perfectly right to address his remarks directly to its nations. By the same token, we ought long ago to have suspended all negotiations and treated the Soviets precisely as we treat the PLO. It is the on again/off again style of negotiating that is so dispiriting. What is worse, it serves to blur the boundaries between legitimate states and tyrannies, between private citizens and governments. Out of office, Mr. Reagan knew the difference between black and white (and between the red-white-and-blue and just plain red). In office, he has had to listen to advisers like Mr. Shultz, whose entire spectrum of belief consists of the infinitely nuanced shades of gray in a Brooks Brothers suit.

Montezuma's real revenge is illegal immigration. No subject has been so foolishly and so ignorantly discussed (even outside of Congress) as immigration reform. The historical perspective that informs any serious political debate is almost entirely missing. A short monograph by John Lukacs, "Immigration and Migration—A Historical Perspective," is all the more welcome for being written by a celebrated American historian. Lukacs surveys the wanderings of European man and distinguishes between the purposeful settlement implied in the word "immigration" and the impermanence of mere migration. (He points out that Sacco and Vanzetti, as well as President McKinley's assassin, were not even naturalized citizens.) For Lukacs, the essence of America is the culture and institutions represented by the English language. Massive migration from the South threatens not just the primacy of our language but also all the institutions of responsible self-government we derive from our British heritage. This short and readable monograph is available from the American Immigration Control Foundation (P.O. Box 525, Monterey, Virginia 24465).

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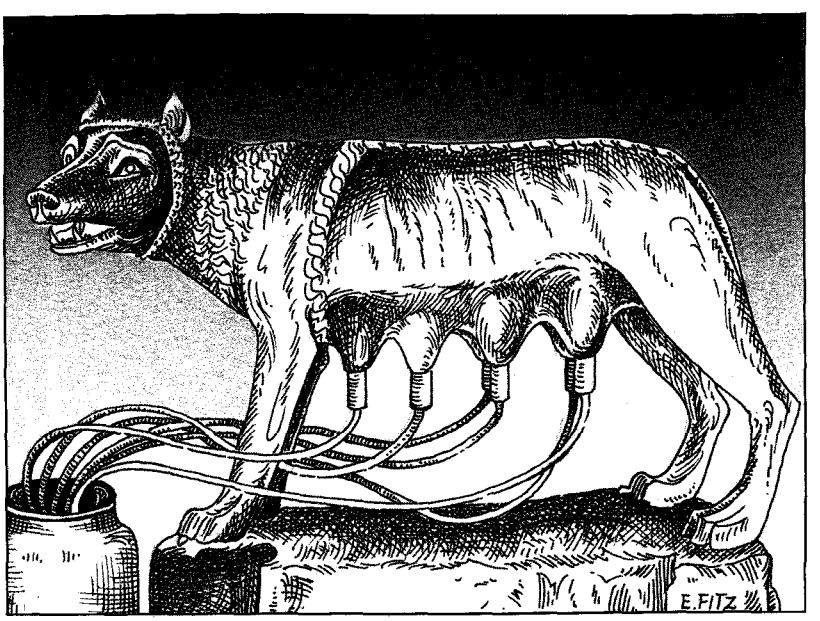
NO LATIN, MUCH LESS GREEK *by Thomas Fleming*

In pondering where the modern age went wrong, writers have pointed to as many answers as there are systems of thought. For conservative editorialists, the problem is Marxism or its lifeless reflection, liberalism. Irving Babbitt blamed the Romantics, while Richard Weaver nailed his thesis on the door of nominalism; and there are still literary scholars who pepper their hermeneutic exercises with imprecations at the gnostics. The poor gnostics. Ever since Hans Jonas—a brilliant scholar—and Erich Voegelin, conservatives have attempted to lay all the sins of human frailty at their door.

It is not that in some sense the ancient heretics didn't anticipate the moderns. Thomas Browne observes (in *Religio Medici*) that, "Heresies perish not with their authors, but like the river Arethusa, though they lose their currents in one place, they rise up again in another." There is as much in Browne's aphorism as in whole volumes of political exegesis. Browne's liability, for moderns, is the fact that he was a learned gentleman who wrote for other learned gentlemen. He did not have to drag out his insight in volume after volume of labored analysis or rub our noses in his erudition. He assumed that his readers would get the significance of Arethusa, a river that was supposed to go underground in Greece and pop up again in Sicily (and thereby hangs a tale). Browne took for granted not only an acquaintance with that tale but a familiarity with ancient heresies and modern religious sects. Put simply, he assumed a classical education.



Not everyone in 17th-century England possessed such attainments, obviously, but it was a century in which Ben Jonson could deride his friend Shakespeare's small Latin and less Greek, when the Dean of St. Paul's filled his satires and elegies with learned allusions that render them unintelligible to professors of English. It was also the age of Dryden's remarkable essay on satire as well as his masterful translation of Vergil (still the best in English), Ovid, and Juvenal. A hundred years later, Samuel Johnson went to France and spoke only Latin. (His French accent was atrocious, and anyone worth talking to was fluent in Latin.) A century after Johnson, Alfred Tennyson was composing poems like "Lucretius" and Matthew Arnold built a reputation (in part) by writing essays on the translation of Homer. Even in the earlier 20th century, poets like Eliot and Pound (to say nothing of the great Latinist A.E. Housman) must be a real puzzle to those who can make nothing out of the constant stream of allusions. Of course, they can always turn to the notes (often wildly inaccurate) that disfigure editions of English poets. But reading a note on "Mithredates he died old" or "Τὸ Καλόν is decreed in the marketplace" is a great deal like having a joke examined. You may understand, but you still don't "get" it. Small wonder that almost the whole of English literature is a closed book to English majors, or that Stanley Kunitz appeals to scholars who cannot read Milton.

It used to be said that no one ignorant of the classics could be considered an educated person. After two generations of searching for alternatives, not much has changed. A Ph.D. in physics or sociology is simply a barbarian if he cannot tell who dragged whom around the walls of what city, because a scientist unfamiliar with the *Iliad* is an alien in his own civilization. In the little village of the educated, where everyone knows the names and family connections of everybody else, the classically illiterate intellectual is an

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alien from the other side of the world.

It takes so little to seem learned in the 1980's. A cleric who can pull chestnuts of Tertullian out of the cold fire of a seminary education can dine out for a year of after-dinner speeches and theological conferences, and an English professor able to quote "*forsan et haec olim meminisse iuvabit*" may find himself in charge of a comparative literature curriculum.

These prodigies of learning, however, must pay a high price for their erudition: alienation from less-favored colleagues. A learned man in a university comes, at length, to view his situation much as Ovid looked upon his exile in Tomis, where the natives made fun of him for speaking Latin!

Professional classicists, on the other hand, have little reason to be smug. A hundred years ago they were the gatekeepers of the liberal arts, until envy of the new specialties drove German and American scholars into adopting what Jacques Barzun called a "scorched earth policy" towards anything smacking of *belles lettres*. At their best, they took too seriously B.L. Gildersleeve's biblical joke that he would rather be a handmaiden in the temple of philology than dwell in the tents of the rhetoricians. At their worst, they have bought every case of outdated snake oil in modernism's warehouse. They caught on to Freud and the new criticism in the 50's, structuralism in the late 60's, and feminism in the 1970's. By 1990 they may even discover astrology and double-knit suits.

How well I remember some of my colleagues: the associate professor of Greek who couldn't explain indirect discourse to his first-year students; the Latinist who wrote articles on Catullan echoes in rock music (as in *Venus in Bluejeans*) without knowing anything about popular music—much less Catullus. Those who are, *mirabile dictu*, competent are sometimes boors who cannot even feign an interest in their discipline. (I well remember a rather good ancient historian cheerfully admitting he read mysteries for pleasure and wouldn't dream of reading Latin off the job.)

Others with lively minds became devotees of modern French or opera or American history (Garry Wills used to be a classicist before he became rich and famous). I do believe that a classicist ought to be able to take all humane learning as his province, but it is a little strange how many good scholars end up doing other things. In contrast, I remember great teachers like Douglas Young, who once reached down (he was about 6'7") to declare, "I find classics inexhaustibly interesting, don't you"—this from a man who had distinguished himself as a poet and political leader, as well as edited the text of Theognis. With great pleasure I also recall the youthful enthusiasm of T.R.S. Broughton, a magisterial student of Roman prosopography. Stupid graduate students sometimes described him as an old fogey, but Broughton loved to quote the gags from Roman Comedy (which the students never got) or spend hours figuring out the answer to a student's idle question. While I'm at it, I still also pay tribute to D.F.S. Thompson, who taught me to appreciate the Latin elegists and whipped us through hundreds of pages of Renaissance neo-Latin that I shall never—try as I might—forget, and two undergraduate professors—poles apart—who got me started: Kiffin Rockwell and Walton Morris, the one an impossible teacher and a great inspiration, the other the sort of pedant who might well have "settled hoti's business." Perhaps it is because their business compels them to rub shoulders with Plato and Demosthenes. It is hard not to be improved by the association. That is, after all, one of the points in favor of the classical curriculum: It takes very little for granted. While other more stimulating systems require an inquiring mind, a lively imagination, or an analytical intelligence, the old-fashioned system of "beating Latin" was designed to work miracles with the most ordinary boys who resisted enlightenment every step of the way.

The old system still works. A series of educational experiments conducted in major American cities reveals a brilliant record of success for Latin programs, particularly those aimed at the so-called "disadvantaged." The most interesting results come from a very elementary program conducted by Rudolph Masciantorio in Philadelphia. In 1971 Philadelphia public schools conducted a study in which fifth-graders were given 15 to 20 minutes of Latin a day. The Latin students were matched with a control group selected both for ability and for background. At the end of the school year, the Latin students were one year ahead of the control group on the vocabulary section of the Iowa Test of Basic Skills. Not surprisingly, Latin enrollment in Philadelphia rose between 1967 and 1976, from 490 to 14,000 despite a school board attempt to cut the budget.

Equally impressive results have been provided by public schools in Boston, Los Angeles, and Washington, DC, where students designated "unfit to learn foreign languages" (because of prior reading ability) in only one year came "from behind" to achieve above average achievement in vocabulary and total reading."

Honesty compels me to admit that classical training does a great deal to improve even unpromising material. As a group, classicists are often dull, but they are not as hopelessly anti-intellectual as the general run of "humanists" in other departments.

These inner-city miracles, let me point out, were achieved with a system of instruction so low-key that the students would never begin to approach proficiency in Latin, no matter how many years they studied. Imagine what could be done with suburban children using the Cambridge Latin Series.

Why Latin has to be reintroduced is, of course, a boring story—a significant part of the long list of misdeeds committed by American educators against American families. To revert to the question I began with—where modernism went wrong—I shall only note that the decline in American culture from the age of Irving Babbitt, T.S. Eliot, and Albert Jay Nock to the age of Norman Mailer, John Ashbery, and Martin Peretz coincides exactly with the decline of the classical curriculum. An educated public would simply not put up with *Ancient Evenings* or the *New Republic* in its present form. If you really want to reform the world, don't give money to PAC's or run guns to Nicaragua. Teach yourself and your children Latin, or, at least, read Vergil and the Emperor Marcus in translation. You may not change the world, but you will change your life.

—*Thomas Fleming*

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THE LATIN INVASIONS OF ENGLISH

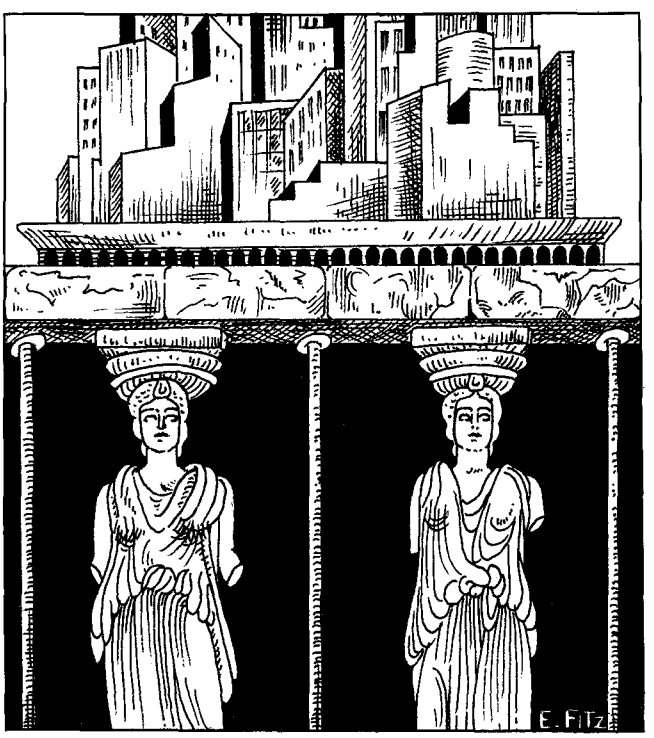
by E. Christian Kopff

"When all is said and done, something sticks in the Barbarians."

—Rudyard Kipling

We need a practical education, an education that will be valid in the unforeseen and unforeseeable future. There are many possible forms, but all must include mathematics and Latin. Of the 100 most *commonly* used words in English, only 10 or so come from Latin. Of *all* English words, however—over a million in the latest dictionaries—more than half are of Latin origin and those of Greek origin take up most of what remains. For a job where you need to use only the most commonly used words, Latin is unnecessary. Those who are planning on careers in law, medicine, or the other professions will find it useful.

How did such a situation, at first sight a rather unnatural one, come about? It is a story of some interest, one I like to call the Latin Invasions of English. The island of England, you see, was Britain and spoke Latin long before it ever heard the voices of the Germanic ancestors of modern English. Julius Caesar tried to invade Britain twice in the 50's of the last century B.C. The account in his *Commentaries* is so brilliant that one hardly notices that two invasions followed by two retreats represent defeat, not victory. It was a 100 years before another Roman tried to conquer Britain, and then it was the Emperor Claudius. Claudius was not an impressive figure. He limped when he walked, he drooled when he talked, and, worst of all, he was an ancient historian, author of a history of the Etruscans. Despite the temporary support of the Praetorian Guard, his administration seemed doomed. Then he had a great idea.



One reason to study ancient history is to learn lessons for today. If you, reader, are ever a president or prime minister whose popularity is sinking in the polls, do what Claudius did: invade and conquer a small island. Claudius did not know of the Falklands or Grenada, but he had heard of Britain from the books of his ancestor Julius Caesar. The campaign was brilliantly orchestrated. The king whose name survives in our literature as Shakespeare's Cymbeline had just died, and his sons were fighting over the succession. The Romans took advantage of the situation to land in Britain and win some skirmishes. Claudius showed up in time to take credit for the major victory and returned to Rome as conquering hero, held a triumph, and named his son Britannicus. He never had to fear lack of popularity again.

Roman Britain was a province, but a wealthy and happy one. Roman villas spread throughout the land and old cities prospered while new ones, such as Londinium, sprang up. The future emperor Constantine, who was to begin to lead the Roman Empire to Christianity, spent much of his youth there.

The Roman Empire, however, eventually fell on hard days. Constantine's reforms were to lead to a long life for part of the Empire, until 1453 in the East, but some limbs had to be chopped away to save the body. One of those limbs was Britain. In the early fifth century A.D., Roman troops were withdrawn. In a generation German tribes

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learned of Britain and began invading. The Latin-speaking Celts fought back, and our stories of King Arthur have their origin in those distant days. Eventually the Germans won and Britain became England, the land of the German-speaking Angles and Saxons.

Our ancestors did not know much Latin, just the few words likely to make an impression on beer-swilling, venison-munching barbarians. Of course, they noticed the Roman roads, *strata*, and our word "street" is a lineal descendent of that impression. (Like many Latin words, *strata* was picked up by scientists in the 19th century and so survives twice in English. A good parallel is the chivalrous medieval word "feat" and the hard 19th-century term "fact," both the descendants of the Latin *factum*.) Of course they noticed the great fortifications. "Wall" is the first half of Latin *vallum*. They also noticed that the Romans drank wine and ate cheese, and those two English words come straight from Latin *vinum* and *caseus*. The latter word has suffered from the changing pronunciation of English, but the *w* of our wine preserves, after all these centuries, the correct Latin pronunciation of *vinum*, long after the Romance descendents of Latin turned to pronouncing it with a *v*. After the eventual conversion of the Germans, more Latin words came into the language from Christianity, including candle, altar, and church.

In 1066 the Angles and Saxons themselves were conquered by a new set of Norsemen, the Normans of France. (Even in those days the French imposed their sense of cultural superiority on lesser breeds without the law.) The conquerors brought in a whole slew of Latin words modified by a transition through Late Latin and French. These were the words of conquerors, and Latin became associated with the rulers and the upper class. So what a peasant works with, "hand," is a good Germanic word, but "stomach," what an aristocrat uses to enjoy the results of his work, is a Latin word. Similarly those filthy animals that the Saxons watched for the rulers were "swine," as still in German, but the delicious food that was made out of them was "porc," a good Latin word. Latin still suffers from the feeling that it is naturally a language of an oppressive elite, even today, although that was only one period of its life in English.

With the 16th century came the Renaissance and the Reformation, new inventions, new continents, and new ideas. All this newness needed new words to describe it. One alternative was to invent totally new sounds to describe this new world. Writers in English, however, made a very important decision. Instead of trying to weld together new sounds to embrace all the new discoveries of their world, they turned their back on the present and sought in the unified and sophisticated world of Ancient Rome the words to describe what was happening around them.

A few examples. How does one describe the feeling that things are getting better? When the world is a unified whole, where classes and doctrine change not, there is no need for such a concept. In the 16th century, people felt that there had been degeneration and emendment. So one of them, William Shakespeare, picked up a Latin word for travel and used it for things getting better, the word "progress." In the Middle Ages this word had existed to describe, for instance, the passage of the king from one noble house to another. Shakespeare used it to describe things not just going, but going somewhere. It did not catch on right away, but in the 19th century it came into its own.

Again, how does one describe the feeling that one is getting older but also better? Sir Thomas Elyot, T.S. Eliot's distant ancestor, wrote a book on education, *The Schole-master*, in which he felt this need. He considered using the word "ripe" from the plant world, but some vague linguistic sense told him that older people would not want to be called "ripe." So he turned to the Latin word for "ripe," *maturus*. People who got better as they grew older were "mature," and the condition was "maturity." We aging Baby Boomers can now be grateful for the thoughtful Elyot and for hundreds of others in the 16th and 17th centuries who coined thousands of words in English out of Latin and Greek. All these words did not survive, but many did, to enrich our speech and to allow the genius of our language to mature, to progress, in an orderly fashion.

A similar situation existed in the 19th and 20th centuries, although here we are dealing with scientific ideas and discoveries. Again the men of that age turned back to ancient Greece and Rome to describe the locomotive and the aeroplane, sociology and hermeneutics. Most of the Latin and Greek in our dictionaries comes from these men who sought to describe a new world in the languages of an old one and so allow the rest of us to assimilate this newness without the trauma of future shock.

It is still going on. We are all concerned with computers nowadays, and the invention is a fairly new one, but the word comes right out of Latin, *computo*, to reckon, and the little flashing light that is signaling to me as I write this on my trusty Kay-Pro in an apartment in the old city of Rome, Italy, is called a *cursor*, another good Latin word, for "runner."

One reason why our society, unlike many others, has been able to assimilate change and newness without falling apart is that we decided, way back in the Renaissance, to introduce the world we had not yet seen, because we were in the process of inventing it, by means of the sounds and words of an ancient society we knew only from books and our imagination. This means that there is another reason for an ambitious young person to learn Latin. Many believe that the ability to think logically is improved by the exercise of transferring thoughts from one linguistic system to another. One meets minds such as Vergil and Cicero, who still have a thing or two to say to our world. The vocabularies of law, medicine, and the sciences are full of Latin words that help a youngster understand those fields and rise in them.

There is more, however. For there will be inventions and ideas coming out in the next generation that none of us have heard of yet, that no one has thought of. If their inventors continue the traditions of our ancestors, they will describe these inventions and discoveries with words taken from Latin. Latin is not only our link to a past rich with adventure and mystery, it is also a ticket to understanding a future which is equally exciting and mysterious. No other field of study can make the same promise, that of rooting us in our past while opening up the future. It is the one secret that no trade rival will ever be able to steal from us, because our creative future is rooted deep in the fertile soil of our richly productive past.

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EPICTETUS IN UNIFORM *by James B. Stockdale*

I was all of 38 years old when I first encountered the classic text that would influence my life. The year was 1962, the book was Epictetus' *Enchiridion*, and we got off to a very unpromising start together. I could not bring myself to see how what that old coot Epictetus had to say bore any relationship to my life as a 20th-century technocrat.

I had so wanted to have this book make an immediate positive impact. It had been a gift of special meaning, because it had come from a man, 16 years my senior, whom I had grown to idolize. He was Philip Rhinelander, professor of philosophy at Stanford University, where I was then finishing two years of graduate school. He had been my mentor for most of a year when, during my very last tutorial session, he had taken down the little worn and marked-up personal volume from a high shelf in his study and said: "Here is a book that a man in your profession should own. Keep it and read it from time to time."

My profession happened to be that of a career naval officer, more specifically at that time an experienced fighter pilot about to return to sea duty to command a carrier-based squadron flying the navy's latest supersonic jets. What did I hold in common with a first-century Stoic who went along page after page reciting epigrams like these?

> Men are disturbed not by things but by the view they take of them.
>
> Do not be concerned with things that are beyond your power.
>
> Demand not that events should happen as you wish, but wish them to happen as they do and you will go on well.

Mid-career graduate education is not uncommon in military life, though it is somewhat rare to have it in a field entirely separate from one's immediate concerns. For nearly 20 years I had been on the operational and technical side of things—an engineering degree from Annapolis, with shore duty as an engineering test pilot bracketed by flying tours in carrier-based squadrons. I was now to return to such an aeronautical life after this sabbatical devoted to the study of political science, economics, and international relations with as much of the humanities as I could pack in. The idea was that I might be so fortunate as to achieve an eventual high command and need the broader base for policymaking, diplomatic and strategic planning duties.

I and others have found that a mid-life second education, particularly one heavily salted with introspective subjects like classical philosophy, can precipitate an unexpected post-graduate wrinkle, an aftershock which develops as one returns to life in the particular—in my case, the world of cutting-edge technology, expediency, and not-infrequent bureaucratic infighting. Throughout the first six or eight months after I arrived back on the operational scene, I underwent a kind of transitional decompression in which I groped for a now-satisfying stable platform of philosophical reference from which I could confidently call my shots. It wasn't because I was in a new environment that I had to screw my head on a new way; it was simply that I now saw contradictions where before I had seen only order. I had to hook my life to a big idea if I was to stay the course.

It was now 1963. Throughout 1961 and 1962 at Stanford, my mind had been awhirl with a whole new shopping list of big ideas. Rhinelander's two-term philosophy course in "The Problems of Good and Evil" had taken me from *The Book of Job* to Camus, with more than a smattering of Plato, Aristotle, Shakespeare, Kant, Pascal, Leibnotz, Spinoza, Descartes, and Hume along the way. But now as I led my squadron on and off the carrier decks in Southeast Asian waters, halfway between war and peace, I gravitated toward a more self-supporting, independent, ethical balance wheel as I suffocated in the moral dilemmas that I could feel closing in on us all. There, my last-found model, Epictetus and his Stoicism, who by then I had made myself better understand, struck the very chord of self-respect and personal autonomy that I so needed to keep my mind clear, to break through the clutter of false hope, of wishful thinking, and to cut myself free.

Had I been an ancient Stoic, I would have expressed what roughly went through my mind, something like this: "Just as in the universe, where the mind of God is immanent and indwelling and moves in a manner self-sufficient and self-ruling, so I as the leader of pilots in times of unexpected change, frequent confusion and occasional duplicity in high places, can do no better than to interpose myself between those pilots and our bumbling bureaucracy as their ultimate guide and protector. I must cast off concern for all things not within my power. Remembering that as I aim for such goals, I must not undertake them by acting moderately, but must let go from within myself that enigmatic mixture of conscience and egoism called honor, and not hesitate to make exceptions to operational rules and procedures as necessary to follow my eternal guides of duty and personal responsibility."

With such an outlook, those eerie years of national decision, 1963 and 1964, were *not* times of great soul-searching for me. One big soul search, embracing Stoicism, and I was off and running; once I had made up my mind not to be concerned with things beyond my power, I was no longer hung up on where I began and where I left off in these enigmatic conditions. The conditions were tailor-made for Stoicism, and in my new-found freedom, tailor-made for me. I came to love the life I lived during those years; in many ways it was unique in modern military history. Washington was determined to call every shot and control every detail, and their operations were compounding and stumbling over one another; normal business was crowded out and chaos frequently reigned. When caught in the crossfire of conflicting imperatives that governed secret missions deep into places like Laos, my conscience coun-

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seled, "Follow your duty as you are able practically to interpret it, don't foolishly endanger your pilots, do what you think is best, improvise with confidence, and be prepared to stand accountable for your actions."

So it was on that most chaotic night of all nights of those years, August 4th, 1964, when Washington decided to go to war officially. Just before midnight, I had been the eyewitness (with the best seat in the house) to an action that had been reported as an attack by North Vietnamese PT boats against the American destroyers *Maddox* and *Joy*. It was in fact a false alarm brought about by the destroyers' phantom radar contacts and faulty sonar operation on a very dark, humid, and stormy night. This was realized during the event by the boss of the destroyers at the scene, and by me, the boss of the airplanes overhead. Corrective messages were sent instantly to Washington: "No PT boats."

A few hours later, I was awakened to organize, brief, and lead the first air strike against North Vietnam, a reprisal for what I knew to be the false alarm. It was true that I had helped repulse an actual attack three days before and that I thought it likely that another real one would occur in the future. But what to do, knowing that hours before Washington had received the false-alarm messages and that it would be none other than I who would be launching a war under false pretenses.

I remember sitting on the side of my shipboard bed, all alone in those predawn minutes, fully conscious of the fact that history was taking a major turn, and that it was I, Jimmy Stockdale, who happened to be in the Ferris-wheel seat that was just coming over the top and starting its descent. I remember two thoughts of those minutes. The first was a pledge: that this was an instant that I was going to tell my grandchildren about some day. I was living through a history lesson that would be important to future generations. The second was a reflection: I thought about Rhinelander and "The Problems of Good and Evil" and Epictetus and how prophetic it had been that we had all come together those very few years before. Probably nobody had ever tested Rhinelander's course as I was likely to test it in not only the hours ahead, but the years ahead. I knew we were stepping into a quagmire. There was no question of getting the truth of that night out: that truth had been out for hours. I was sure that there was nothing I could do to stop the "reprisal" juggernaut pouring out of Washington. My course was clear: to play well the part I had been given. The Author had cast me in a lead role of a Greek tragedy. Who else to lead my pilots into the heavy flak of the city of Vihn and blow the North Vietnamese oil storage tanks off the map?

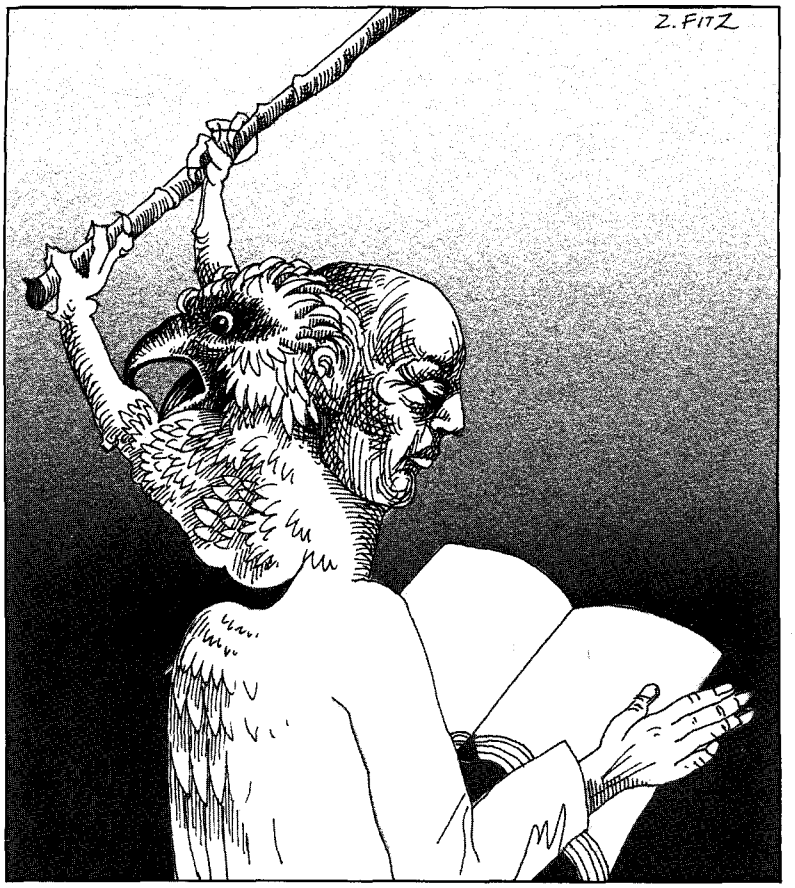
> Remember that you are an actor in a drama of such sort as the Author chooses—if short, then in a short one; if long, then in a long one. If it be his pleasure that you should enact a poor man, or a cripple, or a ruler, or a private citizen, see that you act it well. For this is your business—to act well the given part, but to choose it belongs to another.

So much for Stoicism as a guide to where one begins and where one leaves off in the world of free will. I now take leave of that relatively happy place, stale and jaded though it may have become in those years, and shift to the *much worse* circumstances of the world of compulsion, specifically to that paradigm of a house of compulsion, a political prison. There I found Stoicism an even more perfect fit.

I entered that political prison just a little over a year after I blew those tanks off the map. (The Tonkin Golf Resolution had been passed by the Congress two days later, and the air war in North Vietnam was on.) It was on September 9, 1965, after several hundred bombing missions in that war (and just three years after I left graduate school), that my airplane was finally shot out of the sky. I arrived at the old French dungeon called Hoa Lo ("Fiery Furnace") Prison in Hanoi, as a stretcher case, three days later.

I identify Hoa Lo as a political prison rather than a "POW camp," not just because of its construction (a honeycomb of tiny cells, each with a cement-slab bed, leg irons at its foot, a food chute above the irons, a toilet bucket beside, and a "rat hole" to the outside drainage ditch for flushing), but because of its purposes and the regime of life inside fashioned to achieve those purposes.

Political prisons are places where people are sent to be used or to have their minds changed or both. They are not to be confused with penitentiaries or prison camps, where people are locked up to preserve the public peace or pay their debts to society. Little attention is given to terms of confinement or time schedules. They are institutions devoted only to the discrediting of the inmates' causes; when all the prisoner's juices have been squeezed out, when his forced confession of crimes (usually never committed) are judged to be as convincing as they can be made to be, he is usually free to go. (It's not generally known, but Americans



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held in Hanoi were free to go any time, provided the prisoner (1) cut juicy-enough anti-American tapes *and* (2) that he was then willing to violate our prisoners' underground organization's self-imposed creed of comradeship: "Accept no parole or amnesty; we all go home together." Thus we came to imprison ourselves, for honor, in accordance with our Code of Conduct. I might add that this mystified several high officials of our government in Washington. They didn't know their own Code.)

Given their charge, the breaking of human will, the character of political prisons' regimes is as immutable as that of human nature itself. That is to say, neither what is done nor how the victims grapple with it changes appreciably, century in and century out (Dostoevsky's, Cervantes' and my accounts are all the same). At the heart of the organization is a master extortionist or commissar (Gletkin of *Darkness at Noon*, the Cat of *In Love and War*). They use the same methods that were used in the Middle Ages. They don't use drugs (they want to impose guilt, they want authenticity—no easy outs or plausible denials). They don't use brainwashing (there is no such thing). They use pain, administered by a few selected torture guards. They use isolation, which requires only the cells described above. They use a trip-wire system of multitudinous regulations, some of which many inmates will inadvertently break because of their number and ambiguity, and other regulations which almost all inmates will eventually intentionally break because their requirements defy human nature. (In particular, a regulation for us never to communicate in any way with another American prisoner.) The whole idea is to induce prisoners to break regulations. Since any violation is considered, *prima facie*, moral turpitude ("evidence of ingratitude"), it is used as moral justification to recycle the inmate through the torture meat-grinder. From that, the commissars obtain, on a production line basis, confessions, apologies, and atonements (their big payoff item).

Seasoned veterans of these regimes come to realize that pain and isolation, to say nothing of the other commonly discussed deprivations and miseries, are mere accelerators to the major pincers of this will-breaking machine: imposed fear and guilt. "Destabilize with fear, polarize with guilt," says the graffiti on the cave walls of the alchemists of the Middle Ages who worked on psychic transformation under pressure. In fact, the total regime comes to seem to its sufferers like an alchemist's hermetically sealed, pressurized, and heated retort, in which they are perpetually stalked, hounded down, and harpooned with barbs of fear and guilt.

Like all good squeeze-play systems, this one is built to destroy the man who chooses the "middle way," who decides to be "reasonable," to "meet them halfway." For hours on end, my commissar would plead with me to follow that track: "You are an American, you are pragmatic; come, let us reason together." It is only when he can get you to level with him in some small way, to drop your guard and betray an emotional dependence on his goodwill, that he can get his crowbars of fear and guilt behind your armor and begin to twist.

Political prison extortion is one grand leverage game. The inmate is well served to chant the rules he must live by under his breath: "Show no fear." "Never trigger shame." "The credibility of your defiance must be maintained." "The prison onslaught must be contained." "Never level with a jailer." The prisoner soon learns that to survive with self-respect, he has to strip out all that remains of that student-body-president personality that lurks in all of us—that willingness to be open and to respond in interesting ways. With time and care, many in their own way and with clear knowledge of themselves are well-served to build a new personality from scratch—one that even under torture does not betray its falsity, one that is calculated to be hard to manipulate. What you need is a personality that does not betray a dependence on externals, on others. To have external psychic needs is to be vulnerable, in Stoic terms, to be vulgar.

> The condition and characteristic of a vulgar person is that he never looks for either help or harm from himself, but only from externals. The condition and characteristic of a [Stoic] philosopher is that he looks to himself for all help or harm.

I wouldn't want to suggest that I understood all this going in or that I had become so familiar with the *Enchiridion* as to use it as a textbook on exactly how to face the challenge. I can only say that in remembering my experiences in prison, and in becoming ever-so-more familiar with Stoic literature since my return, that the *Enchiridion* has all the right answers.

On what I will call the tactical side, the main idea I bring away from Epictetus is "stay off the hook." Every convenience one demands, every favor he accepts, every relief he pleads for, every status he admits aspiring to, every attempt he makes to prove something about himself to others (to "show off") is to deal with "externals," and to deal with externals is to give a manipulator an opening. The smart inmate will make it his business to find his tormentor's exact limits, to know his own, and to demonstrate a commitment his adversary will find it unprofitable to challenge.

> A man's master is he who is able to confer or remove whatever that man seeks or shuns. Whoever then would be free, let him wish nothing, let him decline nothing which depends on others; else he must necessarily be a slave.

Shun externals, yes. But a man *must* concern himself greatly, in the world of Epictetus, in the world of extortion and manipulation, with "internals," matters that are "up to him," and only to him.

> Our opinions are up to us, our impulses, desires, aversions—in short whatever is of our own doing.

Viktor Frankl in *Man's Search for Meaning* speaks of the "freedom" he found, even in the depths of terror in his Nazi prison, in realizing that there was only one thing they could never take from him: his attitude, his opinion of what was going on. As Jean-Paul Sartre said to a priest in another Nazi prison, "Remember, the important thing in here is not what they do to you, but what *you* do with what they do to you."

What is inside a man is the only true ticket to freedom, but dealing with the "insides" can also be agonizing. In prison, there is one internal decision that is agonizing

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beyond all others: when first to say "no," when first to knowingly force the commissar's hand to carry out his threats and impose physical torture. This great turning point almost always takes place in a frenzied moment with the new prisoner awash in a sea of guilt and fear. The guilt may well have come from his having "gone along" with the commissar's demand for a little of this and a little of that, while in the fashion of most of us well-brought-up American boys he had chosen "the middle way" (to his now devastating regret) as he took preliminary measure of his predicament. And the fear! It will likely surpass any he will ever experience again. Arthur Koestler described his initial fear of torture (in a Fascist prison in Spain) as "not a healthy fear, but the obsessional and morbid variety . . . the neurotic type of anxiety . . . the irrational anticipation of the unknown punishment."

No men avoid this initial terrible fear that only their imaginations can generate, and few if any avoid the initial hesitant step of giving ground grudgingly while taking the measure of their predicament. But having taken that step and then finding himself sinking into the quagmire of complicity, hardly a man exists who does not wish he had stood up and declared "enough's enough" sooner than he did. For self-respect, and in the long-term sense for mental health, the sooner, the better.

> If a person had delivered up your body to some passer by, you would certainly be angry. And do you feel no shame in delivering up your mind to any reviler, to be disconcerted and confounded?
>
> It is better to die of hunger, exempt from guilt and fear, than to live in affluence with perturbation.
>
> If a man's sense of honour, his good faith, and his prudence are not destroyed, then he too is preserved; but if *any* of these perish or be taken by storm, then he too perishes with them.

Once he has entered the swim of physical resistance, and our neophyte political prisoner realizes that pain in being is in no way as bad as pain in anticipation, and particularly when the fact sinks into him that he is finally fully engaged, a kind of equanimity and pride comes over him. He now knows that it is the *unpunished* complicity, not the tortured compliance, that tears a man apart. He has cast aside the error of depending on "what is not up to him," on another's sympathy, another's gullibility, another's price for making a "deal." He has used both the rational and irrational elements of his soul (they are both part of the same to the Stoic) to see his proper role in the unfolding drama. He has accommodated himself to fate. He has made a declaration to himself and to the prison regime that in what is up to him, he is now "free." He has arrived at the point where the "strategic" side of Stoicism, i.e., accommodation to fate and mind over matter, can bring him peace.

To the Stoics, God and the visible universe are two aspects of the same thing. God's Soul is The Mind, and the visible universe (Nature) is his body. The Mind is the divine reason, immanent in the universe, whose nature reveals itself in the imperturbable and lawlike behavior of Nature. As humans, we are all a part not only of the visible universe, but our minds are also a part of The Mind. The Mind, the universal, divine, all-embracing consciousness, is like a flame, and our individual consciousnesses are sparks in it. Each of us has a divine element in him. Just as God's Soul or The Mind is the active principle of the universe, and his body (Nature) is passive, so are our minds the active principle in us, and our bodies passive. Mind over matter; it all happens up here, don't worry about your body. Also, there is no *chance* in the Stoic ordering of things. All that happens is inevitable, proceeding from God's nature. By using the divine elements in us, we can know how nature proceeds from God's Mind by divine necessity. A free man is one who understands this and accommodates himself to fate. The good man plays well the part fate has dealt him.

Stoicism is certainly not for everybody, and it is not for me in every circumstance, but it is a philosophical expression of the human search for purpose in what we have every right to see as a purposeless world. This is certainly the world of those who find themselves in that ever-proliferating human institution, the political prison. But Stoicism has application well beyond that population. It speaks for men everywhere who persist in competing in what they see as a buzz-saw existence, their backs to the wall, their lives having meaning only so long as they fight for pride with comradeship and joy rather than capitulate to either tyranny or falseness.

In recent years I have been working on books that are heavily focused on the 10 years I spent in Vietnam. Publishers always ask writers to think through questions like, "What in your background can you connect with this or that impulsive action?" or " . . . this or that decision?" I'll have to say that I date most of the dramatic, intuitive stuff back to the frustrations or fears or guilts I incurred as a very young boy. The intellectual inputs (decisions) are harder to place, but the liberal arts ("as much of the humanities as I could pack in") at Stanford undoubtedly allowed me to be more comfortable writing my own rule book as I dealt with unusual circumstances, than had I stuck with high tech all the way. But it was Epictetus who played the unique part in preparing me for all this. I walked in his shoes throughout. Particularly in the prison scene, he was a guide of ethics of course, but more importantly, a guide to outlook, to psychology, to will. One of the most valuable memories I had was that of recalling, even if faintly, that serious scholarship existed about a breed of men devoted to a Principle of Life of staying off the hook and with pride and joy prevailing against all odds in a hopeless world.

So it was in Hanoi that after each of us in his solitude brought about his crucial rite of passage from the neurotic anxiety of the vestibule to the comforting pain of the star chamber, he joined a brotherhood of Stoics, dedicated first and foremost to keeping high the spirits of each other, while locked in combat against hopeless odds, under the banner "stick it in their ear." We flaunted the trip-wire, made them torture us, and prevailed in establishing a civilization of men held together by a network of clandestine wall-tap communication. This civilization matured rapidly (as do all things in the hot and pressurized hermetic), and took on all the usual binding elements of a culture: its own (tap code)

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dialect, its own traditions, its own heroes, its inside jokes, and of course, its own laws, leaders, and specific rules regarding succession to command.

My name appears to this day in official navy records as a man whose government-paid postgraduate education was never utilized. The bureaucracy scores my 24 months at Stanford a waste of money because I was shot down before I ever had a chance to take that Washington job they had in mind for me. But what better preparation for head-of-government of an autonomous colony for nearly eight years than concentrated study just prior on "The Problems of Good and Evil"? And the lessons of Epictetus paid off in pure gold.

The hardships were many, bones were broken, death visited some, but most of us were sure, deep inside, that we were on the right track by staying with internals, by refusing to make deals, by building a clandestine civilization, by seeking and finding purpose in serving each other, in an otherwise purposeless world.

> Difficulties are what show men's character. Therefore, when a difficult crisis meets you, remember that you are as the raw youth whom God the trainer is wrestling.

To the skeptic, I add one assertion: No psychotics came out with us. Every man felt good about himself. That's the difference.

Did I undergo another transitional decompression, a reordering of values, as I reentered this modern world of freedom? The answer is no. I couldn't generate the same kind of turmoil in my mind that occurred when I first reentered the world of bureaucratic infighting and expediency from the halls of Stanford's philosophy corner. I was happy with the philosophic tilt I brought out of prison. Once you've spent a few years as a target for the harpoons of fear and guilt in the hermetic hotbox of a political prison, you develop a very keen sensitivity for the first hints of the onset of an extortionistic squeeze play. We who are in hierarchies—whether they are academic, business, military, or some other sort—are always in positions in which people are trying to manipulate us, to get moral leverage on us. The only defense is to keep yourself clean—never to do or say anything of which you can be made to feel ashamed. A smart person, an ethical person, never gives a manipulator an even break. He is always prepared to quench the extortionist's artful insinuation of guilt with the ice water of a truthful, clear-conscienced put-down.

The more benign the environment, the more insidious is the extortionist's style. How true the Arthurian legend: "Then Arthur learned, as all leaders are astonished to learn, that peace, not war, is the destroyer of men; that tranquillity, rather than danger, is the mother of cowardice; and that not need, but plenty, brings apprehension and unease."

Epictetus' tactics, particularly staying off the hook, are very good advice for those who seek dignity in our modern bureaucratized society. A few years ago I originated and taught a course at Stanford entitled "Combatting Coercion and Manipulation." Though we concentrated on applications of the course in everyday life, I chose our case studies not from office politics but from prison literature (the trial and death of Socrates, the confrontation of Christ by Dostoevsky's Grand Inquisitor, the interrogations of Koestler's Commissar Rubashov by Ivanov and Gletkin, a day in the life of Ivan Denisovich, and Epictetus' and my saga). Stoicism was a matter of deep curiosity to the students. There was much discussion about the sense of freedom and dignity it can spawn, about how its adherents so differed from moderns in never thinking of themselves as victims, about its being a seedbed for the idea of the brotherhood of men, all sharing common status as humans, all born with innate and highly principled ideas and with a touch of the divine.

> For we come into this world with no innate conception of a right-angled triangle, or of a quarter-tone or of a semi-tone, but we are taught what each of these means by systematic instruction; and therefore those who are ignorant of these things do not think that they know them.
>
> On the other hand every one has come into the world with an innate conception as to good and bad, noble and shameful, becoming and unbecoming, happiness and unhappiness, fitting and inappropriate, what is right to do and what is wrong.

Am I personally still committed to Epictetus' Principle of Life? Yes, but not in the sense of following a memorized doctrine. I sometimes become amused at how I have applied it, and continue to apply it, unconsciously. One story will serve as an example.

As the months and years wear on in solitary confinement, it turns out that a man goes crazy if he fails to introduce some ritual into his life. I mean by that a self-imposed obligation to do certain things in a certain order each day. Like most prisoners, I prayed some each day, month after month continually altering and refining a long memorized monologue that probably ran to 10 or 15 minutes. Somewhere along the years, my frame of mind became so pure (this, too, happens in solitary) that I started deleting any begging from God, any requests of God that would work specifically for my benefit. This didn't come out of any new Principle of Life that *I* had developed; it just suddenly started to seem unbecoming to beg. I knew the lesson of *The Book of Job*, that life is not fair. What claim had I for special consideration? By then I had seen enough misery to realize that He had enough to worry about without trying to appease a crybaby like me. And so it has been ever since.

I never thought about the implications of this until recently when I reread *A Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, and it struck home that Solzhenitsyn had the simple soldier Ivan hold the opinion that it is immoral to ask God for any more than your daily bread. It suddenly dawned on me: How Stoic can you get? Ivan and I, so different in background and what is normally called native culture, each caught in so different a predicament (he never alone, I always alone), yet each drawing on a wisdom born of extortion and hardship, a wisdom best articulated by our common ancestor in hardship, the crippled Greek slave, 2000 years before. Through Epictetus, Ivan and I became brothers. Such messages come only through the classics.

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STILL AT THE STILL POINT *by Thomas P. McDonnell*

Thirty-one years ago, when I had aspirations as an up-and-coming critic in the Catholic press, I wrote an essay on T.S. Eliot that was published in the Jesuit weekly, *America*. I thought it daring to suggest that the major poet of our time was something less than the robust Christian figure which an effective propagation of the faith then clearly demanded. In those days, I saw Art in the service of Truth without the former having first served its own needs and virtues as well. I had the sense, at least, to ask what makes a Christian poet in the first place and settled on an answer based on practical grounds. I said that "a Christian poet is one whose work is *Christ-centered,*" and with that kind of emphasis. It did not occur to me that any authentic poem, in harmony with the natural law and certain Thomistic principles, might also be considered a Christian poem at large.

Still, there had to be more to it than that; and I went on from there to specify that the Christian poet "must be primarily a poet of the Redemption, for this is the center and circumference of everything he writes. Christ must be in his poetry, and most of all the blood of Christ." It was this latter figure, no doubt, which was supposed to have clinched the case against Eliot's very aloof and abstract order of the Christian experience. I was emboldened—and perhaps even rude enough—to suggest some difficulty in our having to imagine Eliot as a follower of Christ in a purely Franciscan sense. And yet the point was not wholly outrageous, I modestly insist, when one considers Francis of Assisi as possibly the first great sacramental poet. He beheld in nature itself the very countenance of God the creator; and in this regard, without question, he was precursor to St. John of the Cross and to Gerard Manley Hopkins—the latter, of course, a sacramental poet without peer in the modern age.

It is therefore legitimate to ask whether Eliot, in our own time, was that kind of Christian poet. Frankly, he was not precisely that kind of poet—but neither is it required that he should have been. In an age of almost complete alienation from Christian doctrine, Eliot's was not the voice of the triumphalist. He would not have been heard at all, moreover, if such had been either his demeanor or inclination. Eliot was the poet of *The Waste Land* (1922) before he was the poet of *Four Quartets* (1943), and yet the "Shantih shantih shantih" of the one does not cancel out "the fire and the rose" of the other. In particular, it was not fair for a critic to have claimed, some years ago in *Poetry* (Chicago), that Eliot was incapable of the type of expression uttered by Marlowe's Doctor Faustus: "See, see, where Christ's blood streams in the firmament! One drop would save my soul!" This was not only unfair but inaccurate.

Yet there was a very compelling argument in Spencer Brown's review of Williamson's *A Reader's Guide to T.S. Eliot* which stated in part: "In Eliot's poetry, neither Christ's blood nor any blood streams in the firmament; a thin, beautiful ichor drips quietly under a rock." The reader takes the sense of that for what it's worth, and we may even grant it intellectual assent and nod wisely to ourselves. And yet, upon further reflection, this is not to understand Eliot at all; and it certainly betrays a casual lack of knowledge, with, to say nothing of some want of empathy for, the Eliot text itself. We think at once, for instance, of the verse interlude in *East Coker*, the second of the *Four Quartets*. Reading this section, with its familiar theme—"The wounded surgeon plies the steel"—it is astonishing that anyone could deduce from it the image of a thin and beautiful ichor dripping quietly under a rock. The Christian Sacrament of the Eucharist could not have been more explicit than in Eliot's lines, "The dripping blood our only drink, / The bloody flesh our only food," the explicitness of which has been duly resented by some of the more secularly minded critics of Eliot.

The mistake of the Christian advocate is to presume and even to insist that a poet like Eliot has to go on reiterating endlessly what he has already stated succinctly. T.S. Eliot was a sacramentalist in the practice of both his art and his faith, and no one has a right to demand of him any more than that. It has been little noted, in fact, that one of the great achievements of Eliot is that he has been a sign of contradiction to Emerson's denial of the Eucharistic Presence—a rejection which had long since set the tone for, as Flannery O'Connor once said, "the vaporization of religion in America and therefore of its effects in our literature." T.S. Eliot stands against Emerson even as poets like Walt Whitman and, later, Wallace Stevens had sedulously embraced him and in whom Robert Frost, for example, had early found his predominant model.

Speaking of Robert Frost, a friend and fellow-journalist once asked me which poet I considered to be greater than the other—Robert Frost or T.S. Eliot. After offhandedly evaluating each poet for what I thought he did better than anyone else of his generation, I answered that in the end

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Eliot had to be reckoned the greater poet. My friend wanted to know on what grounds I based that evaluation, and I said I chose Eliot because with him the stakes were simply greater. He went for the main chance, so to speak, which Frost never did until very late in life, and then chiefly in a poem ("Kitty Hawk") which largely fails its theme and intention. Also, I think, Eliot was truer to the times in which he lived—that is to say, the etherized urbanite Eliot may still be with us long after countryman Frost has disappeared with the last polluted fogs of the doomed ecological conscience. It is perhaps just barely useful to add that whereas Robert Frost was a poet we could easily love and only grudgingly admire (especially in the light of the now fashionable derisions provoked by the official biography), T.S. Eliot's poetry is something other than the object of popular affection. And yet, one's admiration of him has been generally vast and conclusive.

When we say we are moderns, we must also admit that we are Prufrock wondering whether we dare to eat a peach or wear the bottoms of our trousers rolled. We are eternally languishing, like another and something-less-than-strong-willed Roland at Roncevalles, maintaining as best we can a rear-guard action to Western civilization's inglorious demise. It is incredible that Eliot, in his 20's, could have been as world-weary as all that. And yet this ennui of Prufrock, the indictment of *The Waste Land*, and the catarrhal utterances of "The Hollow Men" do not tell the end of the story, whether whimper or bang, for there is always *Ash Wednesday* and the even greater redemptive movements of the *Four Quartets* in the offing. This is why Eliot ought to mean so much to us—and how, for example, in less than a dozen lines from *Ash Wednesday* he may be worth the total bucolics of Robert Frost and the gaudy baubles of Wallace Stevens.

Eliot had a perception of the times which most other modern poets have clearly lacked, and he further demonstrated this by becoming a great critic as well as an even greater poet. He early wrote an order of English prose, especially in the essays of *The Sacred Wood* (1920), which surely must rank with the best of the century. These essays, oddly enough, were not without a certain undergraduate sense of high spirits balanced with the insights of a wise professor. Later, some would say that Eliot's criticism had lapsed into mere pomposity. It is the more likely case that these indolent detractors were simply unwilling, for whatever reasons, to make the commitments that Eliot himself had made and which his fine intelligence had carried further than they were either inclined to follow or disposed to understand.

It is to Eliot the poet, however, that one must always return. The body of the work is relatively small, but it has pierced the age like a laser beam out of the encroaching darkness. Reading some of the earlier and more approachable poems—like "Preludes," "Rhapsody on a Windy Night," "Morning at the Window"—one can still taste and smell the city and urban milieu from which Frost and the lesser Georgians had long since fled. Besides dealing with ultimate questions, there is in Eliot a sense of the terrible sadness and anguish of the times. If all this passes away, as it may be biblical to suggest, then perhaps Frost will have survived the actually more profound Eliot; but at present such signs as we have still point to the continued diminishment of a beneficent and healing nature in an increasingly hostile and urbanized world. The liturgical cycles no longer relate to an antipastoral society. In any case, even in such an apparently straightforward poem as "Portrait of a Lady," we hear lines that are nothing less than heartbreaking, banal as that may sound nowadays, just as in some of the fugal abstracts from Bach we often hear the most ineffable and lucidly tuneful themes.

It remains at least improbable that any literate person in the 20th century shall have remained uninfluenced by, or even untouched by, the poetry of T.S. Eliot. You do not often find it a quality attributed to Eliot's poetry that it should touch the reader, but is there anyone in what Dr. Carl Jung called the second half of life who cannot recognize oneself, though in a bitterly poignant way, in "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" alone? The critic Edmund Wilson once wrote an essay in which he noted how many of Eliot's lines have been absorbed into the language of our time—even more so, perhaps, than in the other three great polarities of modern American verse: Frost, Stevens, and William Carlos Williams. But almost every line in "Prufrock" is a very sad music we know by heart and headache.

In the modern era, we are especially blessed in the means we have of hearing the recorded voices of our greatest poets. The voices of Frost and Dylan Thomas come readily to

THE UNKNOWN TRUMPETER

by Warren Hope

"There is an unknown second trumpet man. . . ."
—from notes to a Louis Armstrong album

For all I know he spends his nights on grates
Clinging to clouds of steam,
Trying to sleep and, maybe, dream
Of when he traveled widely playing dates.

Or it could be he's been retired for years—
Tucked in a nursing home
Where a rare visitor will come
To speak to him and wonder at his tears.

But it seems much more likely he is dead,
A fading memory
Among old friends and family
That soon will fail to trouble any head.

No matter how he lives or how he died,
His life has one plain meaning,
The jubilation of his playing,
A joyousness that will not be denied—

A joyousness that brings joy to this room,
Making me offer thanks
To one who from the nameless ranks
Raises sweet riffs tinged with a sense of doom.

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mind and ear. In each instance, the true voice-print of the poet, derived from the poetry on the page itself, is clearly discernible. Having heard Eliot read his poems at Boston College and on other campuses and listening to him on Caedmon records, one knew at once why the word "sepulchral" had already become a usable term in describing the effect of his tone of voice and general demeanor before an audience. But when he used this same tone of voice in the "Old Possum" verses, which would later become the inspiration for the Broadway musical *Cats*, Eliot achieved one of the quietly hilarious performances of our time. He left us much more than that, of course, in a body of work which not only includes the extraordinary poetry but some exceptional criticism and at least one play, *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935), which ought to survive as performed drama of a very high order.

In the end, it was inevitable that someone should have pointed out, as the poet Richard Eberhart took pains to do some years ago, that for 20 years after *Four Quartets*, and therefore until Eliot's death in 1965, the major poet of our time had remained creatively inactive, whereas Frost and others had produced notable poems to the very end. It is captious to make much of this, however, if we fail also to realize that within Eliot's brief span of creative effort he achieved, without question, a level of development beyond which it was impossible to go—in the same way, perhaps, that we may consider Beethoven's last sonatas and quartets as points beyond which we cannot go, at least not as far as art is concerned. Beyond that point, of course, lies the mystical experience itself. The rest is silence and the music of silence. Other poets have not achieved as much, even with the blessing of life spans greater than Eliot's, and so they repeated themselves to the very end and in modes now thoroughly familiar. The permanence of T.S. Eliot, as perhaps the preeminent voice of the 20th century, remains assured.

EZRA POUND'S 'LANGUAGE OF ETERNITY' *by Peter Laurie*

What (to ask one bizarrely unfashionable question) is civilization? Set aside geography, climate, genetics, and luck. The high classical civilizations are marked by certain indispensible accomplishments: a serious respect for facts; related to this, a steady application of work toward stable wealth; a conception of justice moving in two directions, toward society as a whole and toward individuals, implying also respect for family, the process of ancestry and descent, the commonnesses—but also the differences—among persons; a sense of the divine mystery of being and the cosmos; and finally, all of the above taking place within and by grace of the handing down from generation to generation of a rational polity—in other words, respect for the rule of law.

There are exactly *three* loci of sustained high classical civilization: the Mediterranean world, which ultimately blew north-northwest on the winds of renaissance and reformation; the Far Eastern world of China (and later Japan); the so-called New World—meaning north-northwest of a certain navigator's landfall on the shores of a tropic isle later called Santo Domingo.

Let it not pass unnoted that some centuries earlier a certain Venetian made a diplomatic journey overland to a certain Great Khan who ruled what a certain gifted drug addict would one day call a "stately pleasure dome," Cathay, whence he brought into fashion preservative spices, primitive explosives, paper money, and spaghetti. Let it not pass unnoted that both the pedestrian and the navigator subsequently passed some years in jail for opinions out of phase with conventional wisdoms.

Early in our present century, a young American male set out for this Venice, whose Republic was one stepfather to our own, to dedicate his life to writing the definitive poem of civilization. His poem occupied 50 and more years of his turbulent life and flat out *requires* its readers to become familiar with the Greek of Homer and Plotinus, the Latin of Catullus and Roman law, the idiogram of various Confucian Classics, the Occitan of troubadours, the French of Villon and Magna Charta, the English, even, of Layamon, Sir Edward Coke, and John Adams. Needless to say, Americans, who have been freed by their educators from the necessity to learn history or languages, do not read this poem.

In an age when writers, apart from obligatory influences like Dostoevsky, Freud, and Kafka, are supposed to be what John Berryman said he was—"fiendishly original," this most modern of modern poets (who once told a French surrealist he admired *"bon sens plus que l'originalité"*) deliberately set out to be as comprehensively derivative as possible. Ezra Pound shows the vital influence of virtually every great poet who ever wrote. He even quotes whole sequences of these other poets in the middle of his poem! Only a supremely endowed master of his art who was also supremely aware of who he was (in other words "fiendishly original") could bring off such a thing. "It takes *strength* (retorted Vergil to a suggestion he was too influenced by Homer) "to wrest the torch from the hand of Hercules." So we confront a Pound/Homer, also a Pound/Sappho, a Pound/Catullus, a Pound/Propertius, a Pound/Dante, a Pound/Villon, a Pound/Wang Wei (this is a very partial list), a Pound/Thomas Jefferson, a Pound/Confucius, on

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and on to a Pound/Ovid. Among an almost inexhaustible supply of superlatives—not all of them equally honorific—Pound is Ovid's most significant disciple.

In an age immortal by virtue of its poets, the Augustan Age of Rome, this Ovid scaled, in the afterglow of Catullus, Horace, Propertius, and Vergil, the heights of acclaim with such sexual gumdrops as the *Amores* (Marlowe apprenticed on these), the *Heroides* (Middle-Englished by Geoffrey Chaucer as "Tales of Good Wimmen"), and the *Remedia Amoris*, a handbook for Lotharios, from which Pound places a swatch at the beginning of his seventh canto:

> And then the phantom Rome,
> marble narrow for seats
> "Si pulvis nullus" said Ovid,
> "Erit, nullum tamen excute."

("Should the lady's lap lack lint, brush it off anyway.") At 30, Ovid had become Rome's best-loved, best-selling poet. He would seem to have enjoyed this immensely: He took three wives (successively) and was happy with the last.

At 50 he was banished. Augustus suddenly condemned the fresh and delightful verses of his youth, now two decades old, as of "immoral tendency." He was to sail by trireme into a remote trading post, Tomi, on the Black Sea—for a Roman this was like being banished to the moon!—and stay there. Now nothing is sure about this case, except that it was partly personal and that it seems to have involved the Emperor's own daughter (his consort Livia's by her previous marriage), a young lady of taste and tendencies which can only be euphemistically described as "immoral." She too was banished—her cause "license," the timing suspicious. Ovid mumbles something in one of his five late books of *Sorrows* about his crime having been Actaeon's. Use your imagination.

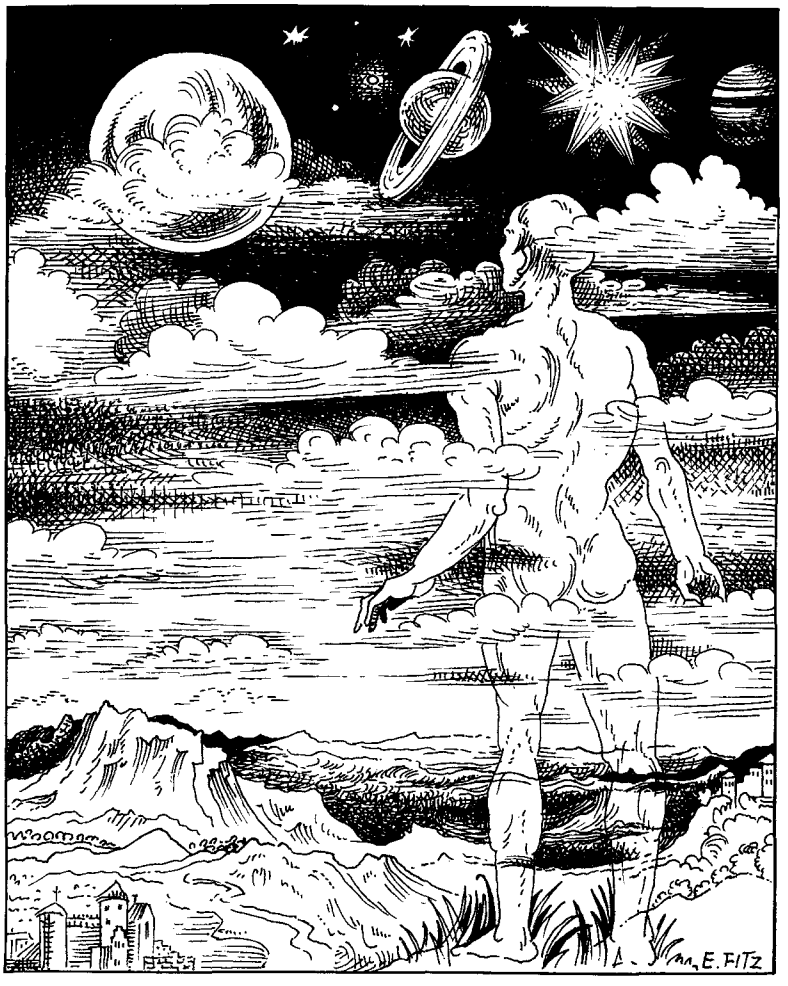
Stunned, stung, at first he burnt his manuscripts. Later, from exile, he asked friends to unsequester their draft copies of his life's work, 15 books of epic hexameter comprising myth and history down to the accession of the Emperor Augustus. He hoped that the magnitude and majesty of his accomplishment would (especially in view of the moving manifest patriotism of the finish) change the Emperor's mind. It never did. Augustus died in moral rectitude, surrounded by the detestable stepchildren who succeeded him. Ovid, in exile, died and lived on: Dante, Chaucer, Villon, Shakespeare, Goethe, Keats, Hugo, virtually every one has been vitally influenced by the *Metamorphoses*.

Not dissimilarly, Pound was held at the close of the war in particularly nasty confinement on charges of giving aid and comfort to the enemy by speaking, wildly to be sure, over Rome Radio. Yet recently unearthed correspondence in the Fascist Archive indicates that the Italian government was so aided and comforted that it was ready to shoot him as an Allied spy! (Mussolini's intervention—"He's nuts, he doesn't grasp Fascism at all, but he's a true friend to Italy. Let him alone!"—spared the poet a Fascist firing squad.) Pound was remanded as mentally unfit to stand trial to a federal hospital for the criminally insane wherein he passed a third of his working life captive (he also spent *all* of his captive life working), but ultimately was released to go into mandatory exile through combined efforts of senators, congressmen, undersecretaries, plus petitions signed by distinguished writers. Pound's response to reporters was: "Waal, Ovid had it worse!"—Ovid having *died* at just the age (60) Pound's worst began.

Of Ovid's pervasive apparition in *The Cantos* of Ezra Pound, finally abandoned as unfinishable at their 803rd page, one can point to at least three aspects: a technical, a substantive, and a cosmic, which we might describe as *Mask*, *Money*, and *Mythos*.

The mask, a literary device in which the narrative voice of the text itself is clearly not the author's own but someone else's, became Modernism's fundamental feature in prose and verse—Rilke, Yeats, Apollinaire, Eliot all flaunting it, Pound employing it, sole, throughout his first volume proper, *Personae*. In origin, Persona refers to Roman theatrical *masks*. Pound's volume accumulated momentum over time with masks of various troubadours, with "Cathay" (Marco Polo, again): a medley of Chinese masks; with the "Homage to Sextus Propertius," an anti-(Roman: but also British)-imperialist mask that constantly threatens to meld Propertius into the opprobrious tones of Henry James; and finally "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley," whose persona is that of some fictitious esthetician-poet of the London of the years of the Great War who undertakes to bury and eulogize the pseudo-defunctive author, a shifting blend of newspeak, Ronsard, Gautier, Villon, Waller (Edmund, not Fats), and Bion's Lament for Adonis.

Mask-as-such was an artistic strategy Pound simply took



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(though he hardly leaves it as he found it) over from the dramatic monologue of Robert Browning, whose forever unread, unknown, and unpraised masterpiece, *Sordello*, Pound called "perfect" mask.

Sordello, the original, was, for reasons of poetic simplicity, one of Pound's special favorites among the troubadours, appearing not only in the Purgatorio but also in Pound's own 36th canto, masks both, and if you ever wondered why on earth the second begins

> Hang it all, Robert Browning,
> there can be but the one "Sordello."
> But Sordello, and my Sordello?

I guess that partly solves it. But the balance of that same canto takes up the betrayal at the hands of sailors of the god Dionysus, a radical retreatment in mask out of Ovid, and it was Ovid, in *Heroides*, an assemblage of made-up lovelorn letters by legendary women, who first brought mask (out of its occasional use by Vergil, who drew on Theocritus and a Greek tradition going back at least as far as Archilochus) to full-blown opus-sustaining prominence.

But (to return to our opening query: what is civilization?) respect for fact, for meaningful wealth, for people, for the divine mystery of being, and for the integrity of the state and its body of law are in all phases of human history—like the Dionysus of the Ovidian second canto—*betrayed*. In the midst of the portrait of John Adams, which is as memorable in its unread way as Stuart's Washington, Pound reads between the lines of Adams' letters and strokes onto his canvas a panoply of infamy—call it Federalist Original Sin—as the Hamilton clique pull off the Scandal of the Assumption. The word "mask" actually appears in the text, assuming outright its grand-theft sense:

> To T. Jefferson:
> "You fear the one, I the few."
> In this matter of redeeming certificates
> that were used payin' the sojers . . .
> Mr. Madison proposed that the original
> shareholders
> shd / get face value
> but not speculators who had bought in the paper
> for nothing
> ov the 64 members of the House of reppyzentativs
> 29 were security holders.
> lappin cream that is, and takin it
> off the veterans.
> an' Mr. Madison's move wuz DEE-feated
> Maclay and Jim Jackson stood out against dirtiness
> smelled this stink before Madison
> smelled it or before he told Tom about it.

The facts are that revolutionary-period promissory notes used to salary the army were at first to be redeemed at 20 percent until the congressional speculators bought them up at 25 to then redeem at "face," creating fortune by fiat, ushering us into the hell of money where, in this poem, we spend most of our time:

> The evil is usury . . .
> With usura
> Hath no man a painted paradise on his church
> wall . . .
> . . . between the usurer and any man who
> wants to do a good job
> (perenne)
> without regard to production—
> a charge
> for the use of money or credit . . .

In the texture of *this* poem, *everything recurs* in modulatory sequence. Later, a mask is crafted out of *Thirty Years' View*, the magisterial (unread!) memoir of Senator Thomas Hart Benton. The mask dissolves at the very moment when Henry Clay, Secretary of State for the Quincy Adams Administration, and the resolute and statesmanly Randolph of Roanoke might have shot one another over the Panama Affair. In fact, both fired wide, shook hands, and stood everyone a needed drink. But Pound deliberately modulates into the *earlier* crisis, when Aaron Burr, marksman, definitively dispatched the conniving and corrupting Alexander Hamilton.

This modulatory maneuver is a trademark of *The Cantos*, and the author has termed this sort of thing the "repeat-in-history." It is a creative transformation of the concept of metempsychosis—that a soul (*psyche*) may transfer from form to form—at the heart of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. What really motivate this entire drama are the out-of-circulation coins about which Pound, as usual, tells us absolutely nothing.

They are (for the interested) Gold Eagles, with resplendent portrait busts of Lady Liberty on their obverse, withdrawn at the end of Jefferson's term of office *to keep them out of the hands of speculators*. One of Hamilton's many perfidies as first Secretary of the Treasury was the deliberate undervaluing of the gold-silver ratio (15- instead of 16-to-one) so that the beautiful symbols of the soundness of the new nation—Jefferson was, among so many other triumphs, the virtual father of the American dollar—were carried abroad and melted down for their gold. The rough reversion of Jackson—who restored the coin and paid, *paid*, the National Debt—was yet to be.

Now nothing fascinates the American character—Pound being the only offspring of the Chief Assayer for the Franklin Mint in Philadelphia—like hard, cold cash. To make (artistically) so much of it—Dante and Balzac aside—was an achievement reserved for a Yank. But what of Ovid, that poet of erotic iridescences and people turned to birds and trees?

The Eagle replaces the British "Sovereign," and Lady Liberty has taken over the place of a particularly pig-visaged portrait bust medallion of George III swathed, like a Roman, in laurels. Point is, the *first* of these laureled "majesties" was Ovid's contemporary—*his* busts at least *looked* like emperors, and the Roman race was very keen on their coin, standing as it did for the integrity of markets, weights, measures, standards, the treasury itself, in fact the national heritage. Coining was sole prerogative of the High Priest (Pontifex Maximus) of the temple of Juno Moneta atop the Capitoline, *moneta* meaning the coin, the die, the mint, the *goddess* Moneta being mother of the *Camenae* (Rome's Muses), *monitae* (from the same verb, *moneo*, to *warn*) being *prophecies*: the so-called Sibylline Books lodged

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in this temple which doubled as Rome's Mint. These matters were not lost on either of our poets.

In the long harsh winters of Pontus, Ovid worked at his greatest love letter to the city he would never see again, his *Fasti*, a calendar of the events that made Rome Rome. Near mid-January occurs the anniversary of the founding of the temple of Juno Moneta, which the poet marks with:

Thee hath the next light,
Whiteness,
set within winter's temple,
one lofty stairway to the birth of coin:
now, Concord, canst thou scrutinize thy horde
of Romans,
now sanctifying hands have made thy House.

Nowhere (so far as I know) has Pound alluded to this passage—probably the most exalted lines ever written about the moral grandeur of honest currency—but everywhere *The Cantos* aspire to its spirit and at one point they actually create Ovid's passage's exact inversion:

That the Pontifex ceased to be holy
—that was in Caesar's time—
who was buggar'd
and the coin ceased to be holy,
and, of course,
they worshipped the emperor.

The Caesar mentioned here is, of course, Julius, whose sexual degradation was noted by Catullus and merely parallels his other desecratory activities: as Pontifex he *debased* the coin, destroyed his own human integrity by pretending to be a god, and ruined the state, turning the Republic into the Empire. "The temple is holy," asserts our modern poet in the spirit of our ancient one, "because the temple is not for sale." The temple is not for sale (at least in a moral epoch such as we might presently hope to return to) because access to the mysteries of the cosmos is one thing money can't buy.

Wearing the masks of our various historical personae, we have passed through the valley of the shadow of money into Elysian Fields of *mythos*. Let us pause a moment to note that I employ the Greek term for a reason. Loose journalistic usage has all but destroyed any pure sense of the word *myth*, now indicating convenient political fictions maintained by coercion or inertia against the truth over time. There is also the merely *decorative* tradition of the verses of the troubadours or a multitude of high Renaissance rapes (various lecherous excuses for a display of giggling cleavage); there is some of that sort of window dressing even in the *Commedia*: There's a lot in Shakespeare, in the tusheries of French Classical Tragedy. Almost all of it goes back to the often titillating verse of Ovid himself. Yet all these poets also used such things in a more serious sense; there is a current of profound *wisdom* communicated through the medium of myth whose devotion to the cultivation of which has set Pound in a class by himself among moderns while making him, as mentioned at the start, Ovid's most significant disciple.

Neither the skeptical urbanities ("Gods are convenient so we tend to believe in them") of our ancient poet nor the caustic empiricisms of our modern one were, in the end, proof against urgent accesses to the "truth" of this form of knowledge:

Dwelleth within us the god. We warm warmed to
his motion.
His cast soweth seeds of sacred mind.
I have outstanding right to have gazed upon
gods' faces:
I am a medium; I am a singer of truths.

So Ovid. The initial phrase ("*est deus in nobis*" etc.) weaves through the late cantos of Pound and leads Ovid on (in the original) to a vision of that same deity, Juno Moneta, whose temple was the shining mint atop Rome's highest hill.

In *mythos* we enter another world: Perhaps it would be more accurate to suggest that another world enters *us* (*est deus in nobis* . . .) wherein our usual state of rational mind no longer obtains. "A god," said Pound, "is an *eternal state of mind*":

The dogs leap on Actaeon,
"Hither, hither, Actaeon,"
Spotted stag of the wood;
Gold, gold, a sheaf of hair,
Thick like a wheat swath,
Blaze, blaze in the sun.
The dogs leap on Actaeon.

That a man out hunting has stumbled onto the secret bathing-place where the Moon renews her virginity; that the goddess in outraged modesty turns him into a stag; that his own hounds run him to earth: through this poet's glorious sleight-of-hand we see (*hear*) it all. If this be but wishful thinking, it is not a kind that most of us have ever done unless in our most intimate horrific nightmares. Are such things so?

I have seen what I have seen.
When they brought in the boy I said:
"He has a god in him,
though I do not know which god."
And they kicked me into the fore-stays.
I have seen what I have seen . . .

So the boy-god Dionysus, shanghai'd by King Pentheus' pirates, is betrayed (we have mentioned this before).

Now, the questing genius of poetic imagination might carry one (an Ovid, a Dante, a Pound) very far into merely *assuming* mysteries of the cosmos on intuition and language alone. Yet unless the universe itself in some even unfathomable fashion respond, one is left forever wondering whether such traditions of the literally marvelous are not just instances—however esthetically superior—of contagious delusional systems of nightmarish wishful thinking. After all, Pound was adjudged to have been, officially, *mad*. No one answers such a question for another; probably one can't even answer it for oneself. But by the closing book of *Metamorphoses* (wherein Pythagoras actually *teaches* the central doctrine of transconsciousness to Rome's King Numa), Ovid has passed from any putative state of superficial fascination with *mythos* to something approaching certitude.

This personal *witness* is the root significance of the stuff

(*continued on page 47*)

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A Fool in the Forest *by Fred Chappell*

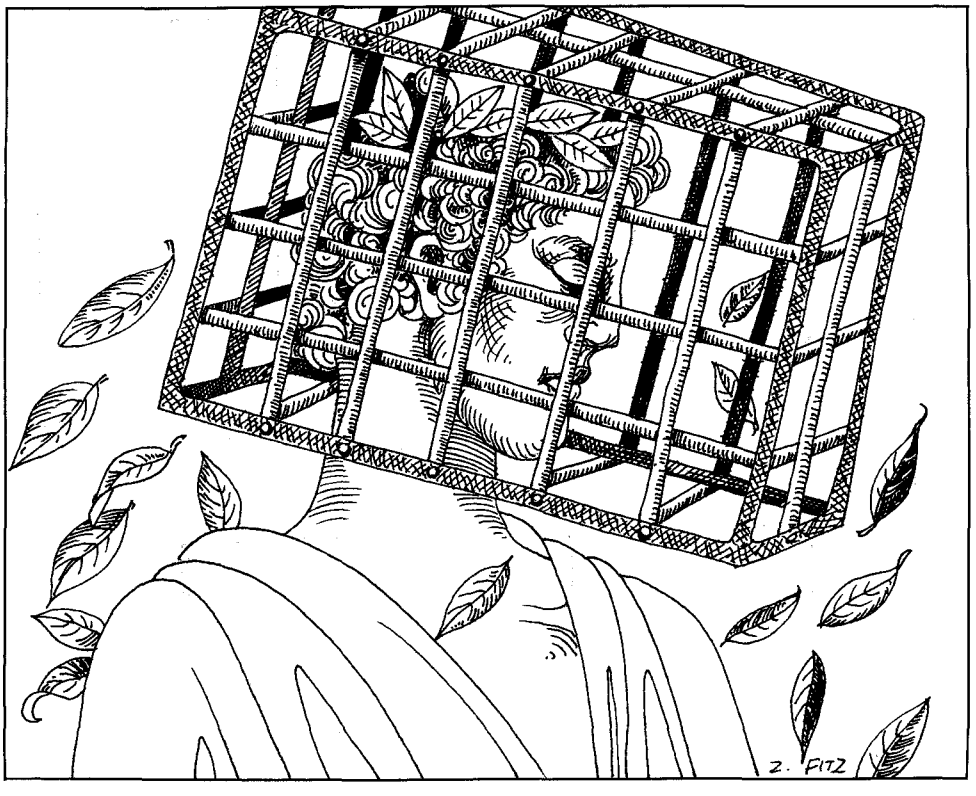
"Shall they hoist me up and show me to the shouting varletry of censuring Rome?"

—William Shakespeare

***The Tristia of Ovid*, translated by David R. Slavitt, Cleveland: Bellflower Press.**

The true facts of the case will lie hidden in time forever. For our purpose here, we can accept the official version: that the emperor Augustus in the year 8 A.D. exiled the poet Ovid to Tomis, a harsh and barbarous town on the edge of the empire, because he had published his *Ars Amatoria* or *Art of Love* some 10 years earlier (and because of some mysterious error). Those verses were judged—perhaps during a secret hearing—to tend to corrupt the morals of the Roman people.

For the rest of his life, the poet's whole output is devoted to attempts to regain favor, to regain his former carefree life at Rome. To this end he sometimes tries to defend his work and to justify the poet's vocation. But Ovid, charming and graceful and mellifluous, is no man's heavy thinker. Few artists are, though popular opinion often burdens them with that reputation. Still, the case is instructive in our decades when censorship has once more become a salient issue.



In *Tristia* II, the longest single poem of the series, we can count at least 18 separate defenses. The fact that they are often muddled, inchoate, and mutually contradictory merely makes them more poignant. Ovid presents them in this order: (1) powerless in itself, poetry makes nothing happen; (2) only part of the *Art of Love* is naughty, much more is decorous; (3) poetry, like the law, aids civilization; (4) the *Art* is addressed only to "licit" lovers; (5) literature is ironic and may be misunderstood; (6) all literary work offers some possible moral risk; (7) even the religious myths treat of salacious matters; (8) I, Ovid, must be seen as a trivial person, not to be taken seriously; (9) I am an incompetent advisor; (10) "My Muse is raffish perhaps, but not I"; (11) erotic literature is all the fashion nowadays; (12) the poet must speak of life as it really is; (13) though official morality changes, human nature does not; (14) other poets have written much more frankly; (15) and in fact I could have done so myself; (16) it is bad policy to make poets martyrs in the name of freedom of speech; (17) writers may change their bad ways, as I have done; (18) I have never abused poetic privilege by making personal attacks.

It is obvious that if Ovid's first defense is true, that literature has no influence over events or behavior, most of the rest of his defenses are irrelevant. But this notion is contradicted by his third defense, in which he links himself with Caesar as a civilizing agent. It is impossible to have it both ways.

If the poet is truly irresponsible, merely at hire as an interior decorator, then he has no inner standards to appeal to. He is at the mercy of popular taste and official edict—and it

Fred Chappell's most recent book is The Source *(Louisiana State University Press).*

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doesn't much matter what happens to him. We shall not blame him for his lively lines any more than we blame the Tiger Swallowtail for its vivid colors, but we can treat him, in all justice, pretty much as we wish.

But if literature is a force in civilization, if it does have influence upon the way we think and behave, then the writer has grave responsibilities. One of them is to tell the truth as he knows it: "The point is the general truth that poets sing / always of love and death, how one answers the other, / how each implies and even demands the other." Yet simple description cannot be the end of his duties. Is he not constrained to render some account of the virtues and to paint them in attractive fashion? Must he not expose the lurid blandishments of the vices? Being responsible, he should answer to these causes.

But it is his sense of responsibility, rather than his irresponsibility, which is more likely to make the writer an enemy, or at least an irritant, of the state. His ideas of vice and virtue, of evil and of good, may not coincide with the ideas of the state. The truth he tries to depict dispassionately may be viewed by the state as indecent or inflammatory. Once the writer sees that it is his responsible thought which will be condemned and censored, he knows at once that every official program of morality is a cynical hypocrisy. It is a nice irony that the Latin tag we use to question the standards of those who would make our public standards—*Quis custodiet?*—is taken from the *Art of Love*, where the loyalty of the wife's guardians to her apprehensive spouse is called in doubt.

Almost haplessly, Ovid puts his finger on the problem. Even the best intentioned program for public morality deceives itself about history and about human nature. No popular impulse for overwhelming moral reform will make any difference. "The human condition doesn't change. The *civis Romanus* / is not a new and different order of man, / but the same old item, luckier, better governed, / a little more powerful, but begotten / the same old way. And we die just like anyone else."

The poet who subscribes to an official morality subscribes to a mercurial party line. Today George Eliot is cynosure, yesterday she was anathema. Yesterday, St. Francis was canonized, today he is banned—or so Chesterton's biography reports. The works most often censored in the English-speaking world are the Bible and Shakespeare. New and virid curricula arise from the ashes of Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Giordano Bruno.

There is a certain lack of imagination on both sides. The writer can depict no evils which have not already been committed times without number, and he cannot condone them without looking as ridiculous as, say, the Marquis de Sade. He can only condemn them in as powerfully dramatic a fashion as possible. The moralist who is shocked by an artist's depiction of immorality is too naive to be trusted; he is like a priest who has never heard of sodomy. And the hypocrisy is always transparent: Martial XI.20 preserves an epigram by Augustus which is more obscene than anything remaining to us from Ovid. A censor censors, finally, only his own reactions.

David Slavitt's usual practice as a translator is a loose and breezy one, and it does very well for the *Tristia*, which is often a redundant and self-pitying work. Slavitt labors to keep the tone light. He does not depart from the text so radically as in his intoxicated (and intoxicating) version of Vergil's *Eclogues*, but he does offer some omission and compression in order to serve up a less weepy English than some of the poems deserve. There are lapses. "My love, fare, as I do not here, well" comes out auditorily as "My love fair as I do not hear well." But the lapses are few; Slavitt's version is easy and witty and as solid as need be. For many reasons it is most welcome now.

REVISIONS

'When Soft Voices Die . . . '

In our attempt to appreciate Greek civilization, moderns are in roughly the same position as a deaf man at Bayreuth. We can admire the setting and costumes, follow the text, but we cannot hear the music. No people in history has ever been more musical than the Greeks. The lyric poems of Sappho and Pindar were actually songs, and a large part of Greek drama consisted of song-and-dance numbers.

Most of what we know about Greek music comes from two sources: hopelessly obscure writers on music theory (some of whom don't appear to know what they're talking about) and a few highly interesting passages in the poets and philosophers. Even trained Hellenists are at sea with most of the technical jargon—which explains why so much poor scholarship has been perpetrated in the name of musicology and why a few great names like Winnington-Ingram shine like beacons across a fog-bound harbor. For all these reasons and more, Andrew Barker is to be praised for his courage and hard work in putting out a translation of major musical texts, *Greek Musical Writings: I, The Musician and His Art* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

Barker's first volume is a collection of very informative passages on the art and performance of music. While most of the passages are familiar to scholars interested in ancient music, there are great advantages in having them all together with a uniform terminology and useful cross-referenced notes. One might have wished for a fuller bibliography (his otherwise careful appendix on the *nomos* ignores more than one valuable article), but some of the omissions will no doubt be made up in later volumes.

We shall never be able to hear Greek music, but with Barker in hand, even a Greekless reader may get some idea of what it meant to the performers and audiences in the very good old days.

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Best Western Civ *by Robert Nisbet*

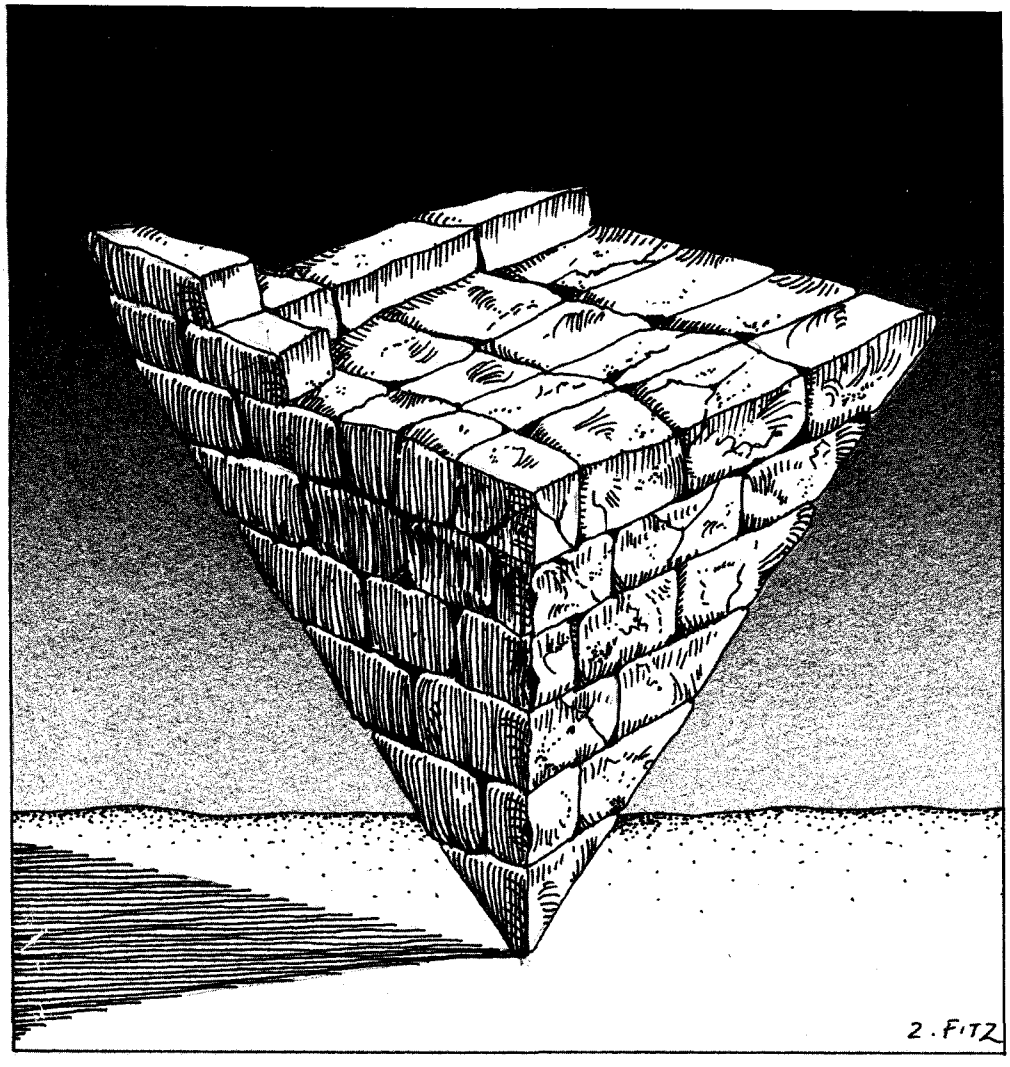
"Sic omnia fatis in peius ruere ac retro sublapsa referre."
(All mortal things are subject to decay.)

—Vergil

The Triumph of the West: The Origins, Rise, and Legacy of Western Civilization by J.M. Roberts, Boston: Little, Brown; $19.95.

This is a handsome book in all pertinent respects. It is stately of subject, nicely written, well-edited, and eye-winning in cover—especially the jacket. Roberts, a well-known British historian and university chancellor, has written the book, we are told, to accompany a 13-part television series which will bear the same title. Given the BBC genius for dramatic, especially historical, presentations, Americans should be in for another lustrous television experience, one to match, let us hope, Lord Clark's now almost legendary *Civilization*.

All the familiar, traditional settings, personages, and events are found in the book, the ones the moderately educated viewers will look forward to from the very beginning of the series: Rome's decline and fall; the rise of Christianity; Charlemagne's crowning; 1066; the repulse of Islam in time's nick; the slumbering Middle Ages; the redemption of the West by the Renaissance (here denoted "New Age"); the blessed Enlightenment with its gifts of freedom, justice, democracy, and other good things; Western expansion to the outermost limits, imperialism, colonialism, Americanism, and industrialism; and the never-ending piling up of technological marvels and, with these, of envies, resentments, jealousies, alienations, anxieties in a mass and on a scale never before seen in the world.



Without doubt, the television viewers will watch the old familiar pageant unfolding on the screen with the kind of pleasure that comes with putting on a comfortable sweater or sensible shoes. The 13 episodes will come and pass too quickly; left will be wishes that more had been shown on the Christians battling the Saracens, the Wars of the Roses, the tournaments, Henry VIII's wives and their decapitations, the grave *philosophes* planning the world's salvation from Christianity, Luther nailing his theses up on the church door, Puritans looking the part, Galileo liberating mankind from darkness and ending once and for all the hive of superstitions that was the Middle Ages, the colorful Renaissance ushering in true rationalism for the first time in human history, and so on, not forgetting of course the two world wars of this century and the triumph of liberalism.

It's hard to know how to react to a book of this sort. Reviewing the Lord's Prayer would be easier. Of course we cherish our heritage, as the phrase has it, and of course we believe in tradition and in the sanctity of the past. But in the interest of the West's true riches, won't some kindly historian come along one of these days and chin himself on the edge of his fur-lined rut, look out on a different world, and then return to his desk to real work instead of the inditing once again of the old familiar epic: first this, and then, and then, and then . . . The format was old when "Omer smote 'is bloomin' lyre" and from the beginning to the present moment has been better adapted to the telling of sad stories of the death of kings than to the kind of *creative use of the past* that our epoch and our people so badly need—indeed that all epochs and peoples have needed. Sometimes I wonder which is real-

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Robert Nisbet's most recent books are Conservatism: Dream and Reality *and* The Making of Modern Society.

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ly worse: teaching no history in the schools or teaching history in the style of Little Red Riding Hood. If the child reaches an age when he is no longer enchanted by Cinderella, can the good old Western pageant be far behind?

The form seems to invite, to stimulate and restimulate, recourse to the hoary conventionalities: those particularly regarding Christianity, the medieval era, the so-called "new age," the Enlightenment, and so on. One would never guess from Roberts' book the historical inseparability of Christianity and the West—for good or ill—right down to the West's current confrontation of the Third World. Closely associated with Christianity is and has been the West's long infatuation with collective progress, or the myths of progress, at least. Roberts deigns to dip his little finger in powerful currents of Judaic messianism, Greek developmentalism, and Augustinian historical determinism, which so many specialists have demonstrated during recent years to be the vital underpinnings of the Western idea of progress, but he is quick to retreat and to resume the comforts of the rationalist's certainty that a conception of progress is as modern as democracy, populism, and egalitarianism. What has given Christianity its distinctiveness and, most of the time, its temporal suzerainty in the world is precisely its powerful conviction, formulated by Augustine in *The City of God*, that it is the vanguard of an earthly progression, at once historical and transhistorical, to eventual perfection that will embrace the entire human race.

The author is wise enough to avoid the worst conceits and fancies about the Renaissance, that is, the "New Age" by which it was known to the Italian humanists of the Quattrocento and now to moderns grown weary of the thought of "rebirth." But one wouldn't guess from his account that Burkhardt's fabled epoch, so far from being a great burst of a new reason, was in truth one of the world's more notable morasses of the occult, the demonic, the narcissistic, and the subjective, in many respects a suddenly raised barrier to development of the science and technology that had begun so promisingly in the 12th and 13th centuries. From the great pioneering researches of Pierre Duhem down to more recent historians of science, it has been evident that, as Herbert Butterfield has put it, the whole Renaissance could have been put in oblivion without affecting in one degree the development of science and technology in the West. It was no spirit of modernity that drove the Galileos, Newtons, and Boyles to their great works; it was instead a persistence of incentives and aspirations which had also driven Roger Bacon and Robert Grosseteste.

What I am saying is, if we must follow our forefathers—ever since Thucydides—in penning unitary and unilinear narratives, let us at least clean up the epic from time to time and rid the story line of some of the modernist superstitions about the philosophy of progress, the nature of medieval civilization, the Enlightenment, and so on. If it is the conventional, heavily clichéd, pageant of the West the reader wants, he will get it here in well-edited, well-written form in Professor Roberts' accompaniment to the television series. But that, sadly, is just about it.

What Is the Good? *by Stanley Rosen*

"We know the good but do not practice it."
—Euripides

***Studies in Political Philosophy* by Leo Strauss, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.**

***The Idea of the Good in Platonic-Aristotelian Philosophy* by Hans-Georg Gadamer, translated by P. Christopher Smith, New Haven: Yale University Press.**

These two unusually interesting collections of studies are in sharp contrast to the contemporary Anglo-Saxon style of academic scholarship. Both authors take seriously the pertinence of classical thought to contemporary discussions of the good. Strauss is even less professorial than Gadamer in that he takes the central issue of our time to be the quarrel between philosophy and religion, a quarrel that is for him of the deepest political significance.

Strauss formulates the political question in "Jerusalem and Athens," the seventh (a significant number!) of his 15 studies. Speaking of the German-Jewish philosopher Hermann Cohen, who attempted to give a Kantian or rationalist interpretation of modern Judaism, Strauss says: "He had a greater faith in the power of modern Western culture to mold the fate of mankind than seems to be warranted now. The worst things that he experienced were the Dreyfus scandal and the pogroms instigated by Czarist Russia: he did not experience Communist Russia and Hitler Germany. More disillusioned regarding modern culture than Cohen was, we wonder whether the two ingredients of modern culture, of the modern synthesis, are not more solid than the synthesis."

Gadamer's scope is much narrower, but the connection between his analyses of Plato and Aristotle on the one hand and contemporary politics in the broad sense is indicated by his culminating emphasis on the role of *phronesis*—"good judgment" or "practical intelligence." This same term plays a pivotal role in Gadamer's very influential theory of philosophical interpretation, as expounded in his most important work, *Truth and Method*. For Gadamer, politics is a specification of culture; in other

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words, "prudence" is central, not merely to textual analysis, but to the interpretation of life. A philosophical consideration of the good is also, at least implicitly, a contribution to political good sense.

In his analysis of "the two ingredients of western culture," Strauss lays primary emphasis upon Plato and the Hebrew Bible. Gadamer, as it were, replaces the Hebrew Bible by Aristotle (which is not to imply that Aristotle is neglected by Strauss). Strauss, despite his great respect for the Hebrew tradition, will strike many readers as a Talmudic version of Latin Averroism, or, to adopt an expression closer to his essays, a Maimonidean whose Aristotelianism is Platonic at the core.

Gadamer emphasizes the fundamental similarities rather than the differences between Plato and Aristotle or their common Socraticism. Similarly, Strauss distinguishes between Plato, who did not claim to have a mission, and Socrates, who did make this claim. In this light, we seem to detect in these two volumes a testimony to the central position of Socrates in the Western tradition.

This leads us to the principal problem raised by both books. Socrates was a man who claimed that he knew only that he did not know. In the same tradition, Strauss reinterprets the so-called Platonic Ideas as fundamental "questions." It is true that Strauss raises the possibility that Socrates knew the difference between good and evil. But he does so in such a way as to demote badness and goodness from their status among the most important things, as well as to leave us with the distinct impression that Socrates was an atheist in the political sense of the word. This makes Socrates hard to distinguish from Nietzsche.

The same problem arises by implication from Gadamer's more "technical" essays. According to Gadamer, "the common problem, basic to both Aristotle's and Plato's investigations, is how the *logos ousias* (the statement of being, of what a thing is) is possible." This statement is for both thinkers one of formal structure, whether of interrelated ideas or of essential predicates. Nevertheless, Gadamer insists upon the fundamentally Socratic or practical core of the Platonic-Aristotelian analysis of the good: upon Plato's conception of the end of all things as expressed in the "measure" or "beauty" of their formal structures, and Aristotle's concern with knowledge of "the right thing to do."

To restate this crucial point, Gadamer insists that "Aristotle . . . holds fast to the Socratic heritage in Plato: the good is the practically good." He also denies that Plato at any stage in his thought intended his ideas to be entirely separate from the world of things, deeds, and speeches. Gadamer concludes: "What Aristotle rejects as such in Plato's philosophy is not the structural order of the whole but the derivation of the structural order from the *hen* (one) and the ontological primacy that Plato gives to mathematics as a consequence."

This is not the place to enter into the technical details of Gadamer's analysis or of the original texts. Our question is rather: What is the connection between *phronesis* or sound judgment and formal structure, whether as articulated by Plato or by Aristotle? No one could doubt that it is crucial for sound judgment to understand the natures of things to a degree that permits valid practical inference. But the kernel of the practical inference is a perception of the good in a sense that does not reduce to formal structure.

One has to say that Gadamer's analyses do not cast any light on the connection between formal structure

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and *phronesis*. Strauss, on the other hand, seems to suppress formal structure entirely, and to leave us with nothing but *phronesis*. We are then obligated to ask: What is the basis for a sound practical judgment according to Strauss? On the basis of his adherence, explicitly and implicitly, to Socratic ignorance, Strauss seems to point to the following alternative. The good is either the posing of fundamental questions, or it is traditional, i.e., "Socratic," conservatism. But how can the posing of a question provide the answer to a practical problem? And is not Strauss's Socrates a scarcely concealed skeptic and atheist? To restate the second of these alternatives, is not Socratic prudence simply the traditional wisdom of men of common sense, and so not at all genuinely philosophical? If so, is this not finally to admit that "historicism," Strauss's great nemesis, is the last truth about human things?

This conclusion is suggested by a consideration of the central essay in Strauss's collection (a pivotal position in his hermeneutics), "Note on the Plan of Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil*." For Nietzsche, *the* philosopher is Plato; so too he clearly prefers the biblical Hebrews to the Christians. To be sure, Nietzsche rejects both Plato and the Hebrews, or at best may be said to incorporate elements from each into his ambiguous prophecy concerning human creativity and the philosophers of the future.

In my opinion, Strauss does not accurately characterize Nietzsche's intention when he says, in a hasty generalization, that "for Nietzsche, as distinguished from the classics, politics belongs from the outset to a lower plane than either philosophy or religion." (Conversely, it may also be doubted whether, on Strauss's own testimony, the "classics" placed politics on the same level as philosophy.) This statement suggests the influence of Heidegger, whose presence broods over the pages of this volume.

In the opening essay, officially devoted to Husserl, Strauss says: "There is no room for political philosophy in Heidegger's work, and this may well be due to the fact that the room in question is occupied by gods or the gods." In his own interpretations, Heidegger transformed Nietzsche into a metaphysician. Strauss seems to imply that Nietzsche was a theologian: "The doctrine of the will to power—the whole doctrine of *Beyond Good and Evil*—is in a manner a vindication of God."

Since Strauss says on the same page that the will to power is an interpretation, that is to say, a human creation, the "God" whom Nietzsche vindicates would seem to be Nietzsche himself. The political implications are obvious enough. To put my point in another way, Strauss clearly regarded Nietzsche and Heidegger as the most important critics and representatives of late modernity. On the reading presented here by Strauss, the modern epoch is essentially a religious phenomenon. More cautiously, it culminates in a quarrel between religion and philosophy, a quarrel in which religion assimilates poetry, thus returning us to the pre-Socratic "origins" so crucial for both Nietzsche and Heidegger, and in so doing triumphs over its ancient enemy.

The quarrel between the ancients and the moderns, as presented explicitly by Strauss and as implied by Gadamer, seems to have resulted in the defeat of both Plato and the Hebrew Bible. The victors, however, are neither Aristotle nor Christianity, but the pre-Socratics, i.e., all those except for Parmenides, or the advocates of comprehensive change, whose general (as Socrates says in the *Theaetetus*) is Homer. In slightly more precise terms, the victors are a romanticized and hence "Judeo-Christianized" version of the pre-Socratics. Could this be because the quarrel was from the outset between two different kinds of poetry, i.e., interpretations of the good?

Gadamer's prudence is unable to establish the connection between itself and formal structure or, as one could put it by using terms he himself accentuates, between beauty and truth. Strauss's Talmudic or Byzantine cunning, lightly camouflaged by a combination of historical learning and intricate political rhetoric, seems to recommend the adoption of a Burkean version of classical conservatism. Whether the recommendation is sound depends upon an assessment of the political nature of the late modern epoch, not upon a direct perception of the political nature ostensibly common to Socrates and to us.

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The Great Spirit of Form

by Stephen Tanner

Slow Homecoming **by Peter Handke, translated by Ralph Manheim, New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $16.95.**

Malcolm Bradbury describes Peter Handke as "unmistakably one of the best writers we have in that self-discovering tendency in contemporary writing we have chosen to call post-modernism." And, true enough, Handke is eminently skillful at what he sets out to do. Poet and playwright as well as novelist, he is concerned above all with exploring the alienated individual's struggle with the external world, his hope being that the individual's discovery of "form" in that world somehow reduces the alienation. Born in Austria in 1942 and plagued by a sense of guilt concerning the German role in World War II, he believes in writing as artistic and philosophic inquiry, a search into forms in pursuit of individual inner peace divorced from the chaotic realm of human history. Some might view this inquiry more as a retreat than a search, for Handke is explicit in identifying such "form-creating thought" with introversion and withdrawal from human interaction and conflict.

For example, during a moment of illumination in the first of this book's three stories, the central character realizes "that history is not a mere sequence of evils, which someone like me can do nothing but despise—but has also, from time immemorial, been a peace-fostering *form* that can be perpetuated by anyone (including me)." Formlessness (later equated with extroversion) inspires guilt, he concludes; but meticulous observation and articulation of the present moment's forms, no matter how insignificant the situation, is a purposeful, satisfying end in itself. "I believe in this moment," the character says; "in writing it down; *I make it my law.*" Handke, as demonstrated particularly in this book and his earlier *The Weight of the World*, a collection of notebook entries, has a remarkable ability to articulate impressions of the immediate moment, an ability obviously generated by a conviction that such formulation is a primary goal of literary art.

In the first story, "The Long Way Around," Valentin Sorger, a geologist who is "nowhere at home," tries to find a saving sense of home in the patterns of landscape near a remote Alaskan village. The isolation and tedium of his situation force him "to take the environing world seriously in the least of its forms." His observing, note-taking, and drawing save his soul "by differentiating him from the Great Formlessness and its dangerous moods and caprices," a formlessness he equates with death, evil, and weightlessness. He realizes that he is "to some extent practicing a religion," but it is not a nature religion because his faith is "directed at nothing." He is seeking neither God nor any kind of supernatural fulfillment, but rather a salvation through form, wrought by attempting to "project a vision of order and clarity." He wants "to teach the landscape to be rational" and surround himself with "the worldly-heavenly charm of things." In short, he wants "the outside world [to] become a living dynamic space behind his forehead." Ultimately, however, he feels compelled, though reluctant, to return to the familiar environment of his native Europe.

The narrator of the second story, "The Lesson of Mont Sainte-Victoire," is the author of Sorger's story. He has learned from Cézanne's painting or *réalisation* of simple earthy forms that reality doesn't have to be hard and evil. Catching simple reality or the form in common things can produce peace. Cézanne's reality, he believes, "became the form he achieved, the form that does not lament transcience or the vicissitudes of history, but transmits existence in peace. Art is concerned with nothing more."

This secular aesthetic religion has a certain appeal in an alarmingly disordered modern world, but seeking salvation solely in feelings for colors and forms and the spacing and arrangement of objects has a price. This price becomes clear, without the author intending it to do so, in the third story, "Child Story." The narrator resembles both Sorger and Sorger's creator. Divorced from his wife, he immerses himself in the life of his young daughter, struggling to find a place for the two of them: a home. It becomes clear, however, that his introverted attempts to find a "home" in the "realm of forms" militate against his attempts to find a literal home by adjusting to the unsettling realities of actual life. Being so intensely aware of the formal impressions of the moment seems to lead to neuroticism and away from the common sense that allows one to understand children and meet practical problems. The situation is epitomized on a page in which he both contemplates the beauty and sanctuary of his religion of forms and strikes his daughter in the face with all his might.

This book is characteristic of a current trend of self-reflexive fiction which, displaying remarkable technical skill, would confine literary art to matters of style and form as ends in themselves.

Stephen Tanner is professor of English at Brigham Young University.

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'Timing Is the Thing'

by Buddy Matthews

Thinking in Time: The Uses of History for Decision-Makers **by Richard E. Neustadt and Ernest R. May, New York: The Free Press; $19.95.**

Which is more important: to know history well or to use what history you know in making important decisions?

With some hesitation (since one is a trained historian), the authors of *Thinking in Time* decide for the latter. In a comparison between Harry Truman's and George Marshall's ability to learn from history, the authors side with Marshall, even though they consider Truman better read.

"To contrast Truman with Marshall is not to make a case against the usefulness of knowledge. Far from it. But knowledge as such, we do suggest, the knowledge of historical specifics, cannot substitute for (even though it supplements) the kind of mental quality that readily connects discrete phenomena over time and repeatedly checks connections. That is a special style of approaching choices, more the planner's or the long-term program manager's than the lawyer's or judge's or consultant's or trouble shooter's—and surely more Marshall's than Truman's."

Subtitled *The Uses of History for Decision-Makers*, *Thinking in Time* is an attempt to instruct people who must "manage" in the way to use history properly. "This book is addressed to those who govern—or hope to do so. It is for men and women elected or appointed to public office. It is also for those who assist them, as aides of 'bureaucrats,' and those who report to them or study them or try to influence them."

Ordinary people are constantly in the position of having to draw on history, whether it is on a professional scale or simply a personal incident in their own past. In drawing on the past, we attempt to learn from it, often making comparisons with the present or perhaps even making predictions for the future. Government officials and businessmen have an obvious need for historical understanding, but so does a person trying to speculate on the future of his favorite team.

There are certain patterns and procedures we use in thinking about the past, but if we are pressed to articulate those procedures, most of us would have some difficulty. The authors' basic recommendations are clear and repeated often. First, they tell us to list in three columns those things *Known*, *Unclear*, and *Presumed*.

Since history sometimes *seems* to repeat itself—as the great influenza epidemic of 1918 looked like a model for the swine flu scare of 1976—it is important to separate the *Likenesses* and *Differences*. If the Ford Administration had done that, we might have been spared a costly boondoggle. In addition, objectives have to be defined (the authors offer a set of helpful questions), and the options must be arranged and screened for feasibility.

The decision-maker must next ask himself and his advisors, "What are the odds of success?" or "What would have to happen in order for me to change my opinion about the possibility of success?" Finally, a decision-maker must exercise *placement*, the attempt to grasp the ideologies and backgrounds of one's advisors in order to determine how their past may be affecting their advice.

The majority of *Thinking in Time* is devoted to case-analysis of recent events like the Bay of Pigs. Not surprisingly, it is the detail-obsessed Jimmy Carter who takes the roughest beating. For all his mistakes, poor Jimmy should have graduated *summa cum laude* from the school of experience. Fortunately, he flunked out at the end of his first term.

Buddy Matthews is a journalist based in Dallas.

God's Fool

by William Isley Jr.

Brideshead Benighted **by Auberon Waugh, Boston: Little, Brown; $16.95.**

Auberon Waugh's finely sharpened pen cuts through the mist of illusions that prevent Americans from seeing Britain as it is. In these articles from the *Spectator*, he exposes a society nearly gone mad. Royalty and commoner, young and old, liberal and conservative are routed by Waugh's scathing satire. He writes of the follies of socialism in which the Nanny State doles out its precious candies to its most bothersome brats. The absurd lengths to which the Nanny State seeks to regulate the lives of its little darlings should serve us as a warning against all would-be save-America-by-government fanatics, whether of the left or the right. I mean, what can you say of a country where householders are forbidden by law to drive out, touch, or destroy bats which have invaded their homes, or where a man is prosecuted and fined $60 for failing to kill his goldfish when it was suffering?

Waugh's response to the foolishness of modern Britain is mockery. Lower-middle-class parents are accused of showing hatred toward their children by stuffing "their mouths with sweets until their teeth blacken and fall out to lie like rabbit droppings all over the fitted carpet in the television lounge." Waugh was disappointed in Parliament because he "had hoped to find the House of Commons like a cornrick where every sheaf lifted will reveal a family of rats fighting, eating and copulating with each other and dashing for cover when exposed to the light of day. Instead, I found an assembly of dirty-minded but torpid and inadequate drunks."

Still there is a problem with Waugh's satire. While stopping the mouths of the wicked and bashing their heads seems to me to be a perfectly proper response, there ought to be something more positive for us to do than carp.

Mr. Waugh may be shy about his own vision because it is rooted in his religious faith. The key to his theology is to be found in two articles. "Self-abasement" argues that modernist Christianity "by perverting the New Testament notion of humility into a message of self-abasement and self-immolation within the 'Community,' is actively assisting the triumph of evil, here identified with the power urge in man." This new humility teaches that man is just a tiny cog in the much more significant wheel of society, history, or the ecosystem. The community is therefore the main driving force in

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events. The logical consequence of this is that the individual is not primarily responsible for his actions, or, to cite an example given by Waugh, it makes sense for a judge to award $45,750 to a convicted rapist against a drunken driver from whom he had accepted a ride on the grounds that the man only started committing rape as a result of his injuries.

Waugh sees the fundamental problem of British society as a surfeit of guilt, which paradoxically stems from losing one's sense of individual responsibility. Everyone is at fault in some way because ultimately no one person is at fault. This misplaced guilt creates an attitude towards oneself and others that Waugh calls "wetness," which might be defined as, I must be nice to all these miserable creatures because it is my fault that they are such nasty brutes. Waugh's slashing style is itself a direct attack upon wetness. The ultimate in wetness is to imagine that the whole structure of society, rather than any individual, is to blame. The solution is consequently to turn our problems and our liberties over to a cadre of "experts," who claim that they will radically reorganize society for the benefit of all but in reality are those with the strongest urge to power and with a psychological need to rule.

This new humility actually degrades man. True humility exalts the individual by making him answerable directly to God and hence more significant than any socialist aggregate. In "The Folly of God," Waugh puts joking at the heart of his theology: "God has created the world purely to amuse Himself." The universe, including man, is gratuitous. The wonder of it all is that the plaything and creature called man is also like unto God. The joke, for that is what it is, reaches its great punch line when God Himself becomes a man. In the Incarnation we see the hilarious paradox of God sucking at his mother's breast, being burped, and falling on His face as he tries to walk. Christian humility does teach men to weep because they are miserable sinners, but more fundamentally it teaches them to laugh because they are an absurd combination of flesh and spirit. Humility exalts because only man can see the joke at the center of the universe.

Yet it is the seriousness of this insight which reveals the chief failure in this collection. G.K. Chesterton once wrote that there are four types of satirists: those, like Rabelais, who love life's absurdities and laugh at them with joy; those, like Swift, who hate the evil that men do and use their wit to attack all mankind; those, like Pope in "Atticus," who can pity the sinner and respect the man even while satirizing both; and those, like Whistler, who mock men because they despise them. Given Waugh's belief in the folly of God, he really should laugh like Rabelais, although in these dark days there is probably good cause to be angry like Swift and forgiving like Pope. Apparently, Waugh prefers to sneer like Whistler.

William Isley Jr. writes from Indianapolis.

In the Beginning

by Clyde Wilson

***Novus Ordo Seclorum: The Intellectual Origins of the Constitution* by Forrest McDonald, Lawrence: University Press of Kansas.**

If it is true that the Constitution of the United States is to be construed by its *intent* rather than by mysterious and highly malleable forces of "evolution," then recovery of the intellectual context out of which it arose is of the highest priority. However, the discovery of intent is primarily a question of *historical* understanding rather than a matter of the sort of legal sophistries used by 19th-century nationalists who rationalized what was established as a Federal republic into a consolidated commercial democracy. Nor is intent a matter of the speculative inquiries into various abstract symbols such as "democracy," "equality," "liberty," engaged in by all 20th-century liberals and most 20th-century conservatives.

For these reasons, the vigorous, convention-busting work of Forrest McDonald, a historian steeped as a historian should be—in the primary documents of the Founding era—is a contribution to constitutional government that can not easily be overestimated. Nothing finer, perhaps, has been written in brief and lucid compass than McDonald's four chapters on the intellectual context of the Founders, both as to the implicit and often unelaborated assumptions which all held in common and as to the points of difference among them.

"The Rights of Englishmen" sets forth the legal heritage of the American colonists with a specificity that corrects innumerable liberal and libertarian misreadings. "Systems of Political Theory" illuminates the American fix on the European and English heritage of political thought, reducing some of the usually emphasized thinkers to their proper lesser role and highlighting others that were important but have been less noticed. "Systems of Political Economy" does the same for economics, which was an emerging category of systematic thought just at the time of the Founding. "The Lessons of Experience, 1776-1787" reviews what had been learned from the Revolution and the making of the state constitutions. All this is expounded with a deep though uncluttered and practical learning that is reminiscent of the Founding generation itself. The chapters which discuss the personnel and proceedings of the Philadelphia Convention, ground which McDonald has covered extensively elsewhere, are less successful, though they do serve the purpose of making a connection between the Convention and the ideas described in earlier chapters.

There is one quite serious lack in the work. There ought to have been a chapter dealing with the debates of the state conventions which ratified the Constitution. For the Constitution, as it came from Philadelphia, was nothing more than a draft, a committee report. It gathered its validity entirely, and therefore in the final analysis its *intent*, from its adoption by the people of the states. That ratification embodied a significant further elucidation and amendment of the terms by which it was to be understood. But McDonald is a conservative of the Federalist persuasion whose hero is Alexander Hamilton. From that standpoint, as from the standpoint of 19th-century nationalists and 20th-century liberals, it is unseemly to dwell upon the fact that it was ratification by the states and not drafting by the Convention which gave the Constitution its validity.

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Therefore, investigation of the intent of the Constitution conventionally concentrates on the discussions in Philadelphia. To pursue the meaning of the Constitution further would throw us all the way back to that ancient, once supreme but long discredited idea of states' rights.

McDonald is our best historian of the Founding era. No one has sounded that era more deeply and fruitfully, and it is a kind of counsel of perfection to ask for more. Yet, if he could be persuaded to study the polemics of the 19th century, between the states' rights school of Calhoun, Stephens, John Taylor, Dabney, Bledsoe, and numerous others, and the consolidators—such as Story, Curtis, Bancroft, and Sumner—then he would gain insight into how the very context of the Founding was subtly warped by the latter in ways that have affected the historical vision of all later commentators, including, perhaps, even McDonald himself.

Clyde Wilson is editor of The Papers of John C. Calhoun *and professor of history at the University of South Carolina.*

Doctors of Education?

by Gary Jason

Education's Smoking Gun: How Teachers Colleges Have Destroyed Education in America **by Reginald Damerell, New York: Freundlich Books.**

A recent issue of *Forbes* contained the truly wonderful news that a corporation is now selling a video encyclopedia of the 20th century. This is sure to be a hot item in the "education technology" business. Today's students, who dislike ordinary encyclopedias because they must be read, can now "tap into the visual side of their brains" and get their history by TV.

Anybody concerned about the dismal state of education today can only be depressed at such inventions. Who comes up with these nifty new educational ideas? The answer is, of course, "educationists," by which I mean professors of education along with consultants and educators who have degrees in education from various "teachers colleges." In the burgeoning literature on the decline of education, not much attention has been paid to the culpability of educationists for the degeneration of American education. Reginald Damerell has written a fascinating book which shines a light on educationists, one that will surely make the roaches scramble for cover.

Damerell should know what he's talking about. After 11 years as a copywriter for an advertising agency, he was invited to join the faculty of the University of Massachusetts (Amherst) College of Education, after the critical and popular success of his book *Triumph in a White Suburb*, about a desegregation fight. While a professor of education, Damerell discovered an awful truth: Educationists are usually full of nonsense. Those professors in more rigorous disciplines simply dismiss departments of education as worthless. Ph.D.'s in classics or physics show more respect for a driver's license than for an Ed.D., the standard academic credential among educationists. It is widely understood that the academic losers enter the school of education because they cannot make it in any of the tougher disciplines (arts and sciences, engineering, medicine, law, or computer science). But since most professors don't take the educationists seriously enough to bother publicizing their failings, and since professors of education are themselves eager to keep the public in the dark, it takes a Mr.-Smith-goes-to-Washington (or more exactly, Amherst) to do the job.

Damerell's book is great fun to read. He recounts the story of Mary, accepted into the doctoral program at Amherst with Graduate Record Exam scores of 210 quantitative and 240 verbal—in effect, *zero* because the lowest score possible is 200. A room-temperature IQ did not prevent her from attaining the Ed.D. Damerell discovered that Bill Cosby received one, too—and so did the wife of the dean of the school. All three got their degrees by taking lots of "independent study" courses and doing "research" that falls far short of what would be accepted in other disciplines. Seeing such cases firsthand opened Damerell's eyes.

As a field with no body of knowledge, a subject in search of content, education is filled with inane ideas. None is sillier than the current push among educationists for "visual literacy," vaguely defined as:

> . . . a group of vision competencies a human being can develop by seeing and at the same time having and integrating other sensory experiences.

As a man who once earned his living writing TV commercials, Damerell makes short work of "visual literacy" before moving on to dissect other idiocies. Damerell explains in detail the damage education theorists have done to reading instruction, although curiously he does not discuss the excellent work done by Rudolf Flesch (author of the 1955 classic *Why Johnny Can't Read*) in generating public pressure for better reading instruction. Damerell also does a good job of documenting how educationists—especially the infamous Mary Futrell of the NEA—lowered standards for both teachers and students. (Only recently and reluctantly has the NEA supported even weak standards for teacher certification.) Textbooks have been lowered in quality, tests eliminated or watered down, and so on—the whole familiar, disgusting scene is reviewed in his book.

Damerell goes beyond the usual (quite correct) criticisms of current education theory to broach a touchy topic: the poor academic performance of minorities. He finds that Asians do better academically than blacks or other minorities not because of differences in innate intelligence but rather because of better work habits and higher parental expectations. Asians do well because they work: They read, write, compute, both in the classroom and at home. Not for them the nostrums of the education-school quacks: learning by TV ("visual literacy"); "bilingualism" as an excuse for not learning English; "self-image" building through inflated grades; substitution of touchy-feely electives for math and grammar. For speaking the simple truth Damerell will probably be attacked by education bureaucrats as racist, though he was awarded a

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Human Relations Award by the Urban League of Bergin County and though he worked to elect Teaneck's first black councilman and to pass fair-housing laws. He has shown about educational programs what Charles Murray has shown about welfare programs: that liberal programs hurt blacks and other minorities, and hurt them badly. His radical suggestion that we eliminate all schools of education deserves support from thoughtful Americans of every race.

Gary Jason is a doctoral candidate in computer science at the University of California—Irvine.

CORRESPONDENCE

Letter From the Heartland

by Jane Greer

Just the Way We Are

Zig Ziglar came to Bismarck recently. (My husband, who doesn't do aerobics, likes his finger of Cutty before bed, and is understandably paranoid about his decadent life-style, says it feels to him as if Zig comes here once a month.) A lot of people I know went to the performance, and many bought Zig's books and tapes right there on the spot, being filled with the natural high that an hour of good clean living can produce.

What did Zig come to tell us? Nothing less than how to break bad habits, work to our full human potential, and spring out of bed in the morning—*every* morning—to greet the day secure in the knowledge that we're free of chemical and attitudinal impurities.

I'm happy to announce—and I'm sure Zig's happy to *have* me announce—that he will never work himself out of a job. There will always be a place for him and others like him on our podiums in front of record crowds. Zig is a drug, and when we come down from swallowing him whole, we have to face an ugly fact of life: We love the way we are.

What self-help advocates refuse to acknowledge (and if we ever decide to *truly* help our*selves*, what will become of their book sales?) is that human inertia, our disinclination to stop bad habits and start good ones, is heartfelt and—important in this era of unpronounceable additives—100 percent natural.

How long have we known that smoking might kill us, that French fries attach their mushy innards directly to the interiors of our arteries, that seatbelts are better than nothing? Forever, it seems. But up until the relatively recent frenzy of "smoke-outs" (telling title, that), "a la heart" menus, seatbelt commercials, and all the other suddenly fashionable attacks on our brittle spheres of individual freedom or ego, who among us cared much? Not many. And if all these campaigns were halted tomorrow, not many would have permanently altered their lifestyles.

Our magnificent inertia doesn't apply only to life-and-death matters. Remember the awful "Metric Scare"? Every so often, radio spots and news releases, produced inside the Beltway for consumption in Podunk, would leak like toxic waste into our feeling of well-being: *Learn metric or be the laughingstock of your friends and loved ones. Don't get left behind in your career by those who can read the handwriting on the wall.* We all knew better. That handwriting was merely government graffiti, scrawled by hoodlums in the high five figures. We knew that if "they" *really* thought it was important we'd be *made* to comply, as we're made to crawl along prairie interstates at 55 miles an hour and sit behind exploding airbags in new cars. And we've been vindicated: The "Metric Scare" passed like a thief in the night, stealing only our tax dollars, leaving us unscathed to tell the story to disbelieving grandchildren.

Most recently it's been the nine-digit zip code, which the USPS says will help our mail get there faster and more efficiently. Obviously, 999 out of 1,000 other Americans agree with me that our mail service is stupendous just the way it is, because that's the ratio of non-zip-plus-four to zip-plus-four mail I receive. Some letters addressed to me (*never* those sent *by* me, let me hasten to add) are even, pardon the expression, zipless, and still they saunter in. The occasional zip-plus-four address cowers among my other mail like a virgin at an Aztec convention.

Let's face it: Self-preservation is *not* our strongest instinct; is, in fact, an impossibility. We *know* we're only tourists here, so why not see the sights before the bus pulls out? Our innocent vices and our mulishness where it matters least are a large part of what makes us human. Humanhood alone has the wits to luxuriate in the status quo—to understand that life is a gift, meant to be enjoyed—and the raw determination to sometimes transgress that status quo if it means a real reward. Humanhood alone can look up from a plate of fried chicken livers, light a cigar, drain the last of the wine, and, perfectly aware that such habits are unhealthy for the body, say, with conviction, *I AM okay! You ARE okay!*—and be correct. The feast of the soul is a strictly human event.

As I was telling my husband just the other night, I could never *love* a man who was *totally* perfect. It seemed to reassure him. What it comes down to is that people who never smoke, never drink, never gossip or tell dirty jokes or swear, never compete too hard or take defeat personally—people who grimly jog 10 miles a day, smirk as they load their plate with the dregs of the food chain, and never permit themselves a good sulk or a moment of despair—such people are too good to be among

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us, and we wish they would go away.

When she's not eating potato chips and watching L.A. Law, *Jane Greer edits* Plains Poetry Journal.

Letter From South America

by Geoffrey Wagner

Traveling in the Black

"I never save less than $400 on a round-trip ticket Kennedy-de Gaulle," said the 40ish, balding businessman in the paneled bar of his Manhattan club. "I fly Concorde to Paris once a month. My secretary buys my New York-Paris ticket, which is presently around $1,200, and books my return. In Paris I change dollars at a premium and buy the westward flight back for about $800. Whichever way you cut it, your credit-card company is going to give you the lowest possible foreign-exchange rate and make a bundle doing so."

"But it offers me safety," I (a law-and-order guy) corrected him.

"Okay," he conceded. "But with the dollar as strong as it is in South America, you have to be crazy not to buy local currencies in the black market there and pay for your travel, hotels, purchases, whatever, in local monies. There's nothing illegal in doing so."

Only risky, I thought, about to leave with my wife for an extensive trip through that lovely, hopelessly debt-ridden continent, and unable to use the cheapie tour deals which limit your time. So I decided to take my friend's advice and trade in the *negro*, as it's known south of the border. My conversation with him took place two years ago, and rates have changed, but as a blanket strategy—give or take a little—my businessman's plan has worked through several trips since, the benchmark being, of course, the five rates of exchange for going currencies quoted in something like the *New York Times*: *c*=commercial, *d*=controlled, *f*=financial, *v*=official (the big one), *z*=floating. I submit my findings.

Venezuela: not an easy country to lark about in money-wise, and far less hungry for the dollar than most; the bolivar was then varying from nine, in hotels and shops, to 13 per U.S. dollar, at the airport. This extremely exceptional, and artificial, situation was due to the government's Bs. 9.90 rate for dollar sales and Bs. 4.3 for essential imports, a practice against which the chairman of the main exchange house, Italcambio, has complained, and which has been somewhat modified by incoming Jaime Lusinchi. But the outlines remain the same. They mean that if you get *v*, the official rate, on your credit-card billing, you'll be badly burned and lose $20 per $100 when changing at a hotel. This spread of rates is, of course, a symptom of economic malaise: Indeed, in Alfonsin's Argentina the same spread climbed from 10 percent to 30 percent in the time we were there.

Brazil: We arrived in Rio's gracious airport at the height of an unreasoning dollar panic, plus 44-degree centigrade temperatures, and I've not seen its like since the side-streets of Naples in the war, when U.S. troops were running riot with the green (a General Issue American soldier received five times as much at the pay table as his British equivalent). At Rio the lobby was physically hard to thrust through, so many touts were offering bargain cruzeiro deals, while hotels sent representatives to hold up placards advertising their rates. We were even approached by two families, both better-heeled in appearance than us, desirous of unloading cruzeiros at almost any price. The official rate was in the 900's then, but it was easy to get 13 in the hotels, with streetside *cambios* (exchange shops) offering much more.

However, *caveat emptor*. The Rio *cambios* required greenbacks rather than traveler's checks; this, of course, can create difficulties since it is not always possible to obtain dollars for traveler's checks, even with a U.S. passport and return ticket. (Worse, the Rio *cambio* to which I repaired, on recommendation, run by a youth who resembled a Vegas pit boss, was impolite.) Still, the rates, soaring as we left, were golden enough to buy a lot of travel in that long-distance continent.

BOOKS IN BRIEF

Love in Ancient Rome **by Pierre Grimal with a foreword by William R. Nethercut, translated from the French by Arthur Train Jr., Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press.** A readable translation of an entertaining exploration of love and sex in the eternal city. In the typically French fashion of undocumented erudition (the list of selected readings has nothing to do with text), Grimal draws upon his reading of Roman literature in painting this sympathetic portrait. The only fly in the ointment is a hopelessly tendentious and irrelevant introduction by the irrepressible Prof. Nethercut.

Studies in Land and Credit in Ancient Athens, 500-200 B.C. **by Moses J. Finley, with an introductory essay by Paul Millett, New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books; $39.95.** Sir Moses Finley was among the most brilliant students of Greek social and economic life and scholars will be grateful to Transaction for bringing *Land and Credit* back into print with an eminently useful introduction updating this 1952 classic.

The Christians and the Roman Empire **by Marta Sordi, translated by Annabel Bedini, Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press.** An intelligent and well-argued discussion of a question of more than passing interest to nonscholars. Sordi argues that while Christians were, in fact, persecuted by the Roman state, the conflict was essentially religious rather than political. Christians remained loyal to the empire even during periods of persecution triggered by religious fanatics. Sordi's book is a useful corrective not only to some religious propaganda currently in print but also to more serious works that have attempted to portray the Roman Empire as a totalitarian society—should be required reading for serious Christians.

The Reign of the Phallus: Sexual Politics in Ancient Athens **by Eva C. Keuls, New York: Harper & Row; $27.50.** A remarkably silly book that is adored by every classicist who isn't wrapped too tight. There are occasional insights along the way, but Prof. Keuls's hatred of Greek (all?) males verges on the pathological. Not for faint hearts, delicate stomachs, or sound minds.

Aristotle on Comedy: Towards a Reconstruction of Poetics II **by Richard Janko, London: Duckworth.** What Aristotle had to say about comedy in the lost second book of the *Poetics* is a great mystery—as anyone knows who has read *The Name of the Rose*. Richard Janko, in his own careful way, has done a piece of detective work every bit as fascinating as Umberto Eco's clerical investigator. While his conclusions are likely to be controversial for some time, Janko has demonstrated again the potential significance of properly applied pedantry.

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While my wife sat it out in Varig and Lineas Argentinas offices (the latter line said to be losing a million dollars a day), I hied back and forth to various sources for the loot. Since we like to travel first-class in such parts, this involved carrying cruzeiros in the millions in my walk shorts through some pretty hoody thoroughfares. Your average mom-'n'-pop tourist might not want to do this, even accompanied, as I took the trouble to be, by a rent-a-bodyguard boy behind. Furthermore, the conservative Copacabana Palace to which I kept returning, since it had just announced some excellent rates (with probably the least counterfeit money), began to develop suspicion of my large requests. A superior individual was summoned to interrogate me, possibly because I look a little older and more organized, not to mention *clad*, than the average Rio beachcomber. Some time later in Brazil, arriving at the lovely Varig (viz government) hotel over the Iguassù Falls, far from any change sharks, I thought that *v* had finally caught up with me. This was not the case. The bellboy who carried up our bags began peeling cruzeiros out of his pants pockets as soon as he'd reached our room—quite the best rate we got in Brazil.

Paraguay: Since there is no bank at the tiny airport for Asunción, I changed taxi fare at a stationer's at the then-official rate of 160 guarini to the dollar. The pleasant hotel on the river outside the capital to which we later repaired gave me 348. I did not see any *cambios* in the unimpressive town, nor in either of the two Dictator Gothic hotels there. But, parenthetically, Paraguay must not be oversimplified, as it is by stupid American liberals who will doubtless declare war on Stroessner after they've finished with Pinochet and who make for much local suspicion, if not plain resentment, of the rare *norteamericano* visitor. Among other pleasures, the food in our hotel, which cost a song, was some of the best we had in South America.

Argentina: Don't cry for me, moneychanger. Here again the dollar frenzy was in full, if more orderly, spate. So were prices. While Claridge's in London was charging 200 pounds a night, our room in its Buenos Aires namesake, with breakfast and a garden terrace over the pool, cost $65. Florida, the famous BA shopping mall, was positively staked-out with quick-change artists. During four stays in the lovely city, I have dealt with several, favoring one pair of *louche*-looking Italian gays who spent most of our transactions screaming hysterically at each other in the subterranean "office" marked *Cueros* (Leather Goods), to which I was directed. Needless to say, there was no leather about, only, as in such redoubts, a wall safe and calculator. I changed a lot of dough with Piccolo, as the aging impressario of the pair was called, and did not regret it at 34 pesos rather than the official 24.50. It made my hotel room even cheaper.

In lakeside Bariloche (while a group of Tolstoyan teenage girls besieged my wife with questions like "What was the first poem your husband sent to you?") Riccardo, our friendly changeman, operated from an open counter in a busy mall. He would have lasted two minutes in Times Square.

Peru: I never went near a *cambio* there (if such exist). Since places like Lima and Cuzco are such pickpockets' paradises, I invariably carried the minimum of sols on my person (even so, I was relieved of some in the latter town by a stage prestidigitator *manqué*). As to the other countries, I have only touched on Uruguay, now with its own new peso, found Chile beautifully organized and totally off limits to *negros* of the monetary variety, its Guardia extremely civil, and have never been to Colombia or Bolivia nor wish to repair the omission.

Now, before my experiences be taken for "Never leave home with it" advice, I would emphasize that the credit card is useful in checking out of this country or that. Though I have saved thousands of dollars dealing with legitimate *cambios*, I still nurse far too many depreciating South American bank notes, from failing to calculate last-minute needs carefully enough.

Neither, apparently, did some Cuban Intelligence types who for nearly five years occupied a house opposite our home in Grenada. After U.S. Rangers had encouraged them to leave, two young boys guarding goats near the local village came up to say they had found several satchels stashed in some dried-out bush close to our grounds. The find was reported to the incumbent 82nd Airborne bomb-disposal squad, since the Cubans had learned some savage booby-trapping tricks from their Russian instructors. The kids came out ahead. Six million in noncounterfeit U.S. dollars was found in those valises, and the boys got handsome bounties—from all of which I assume there are no credit cards in Cuba.

Geoffrey Wagner's new novel, The Red Crab, *a farcical thriller set in a Caribbean island, has just been published by Jameson Books.*

Letter From the Lower Right

by John Shelton Reed

Does Anyone Feel a Draft?

I grew up in the Volunteer State of Tennessee, so called because of its citizens' enthusiastic response to the First Mexican War. Maybe growing up there colors my view that wars ought to be fought by folks who want to fight them—and it certainly increases my estimate of the number of young men who enjoy that sort of thing. So I start with a prejudice against conscription, anchored in a belief that it wouldn't be necessary in a healthy society.

That's why I viewed with suspicion a recent report from the Ford Foundation called *National Service, What Would It Mean?* I thought it was going to make a case for reinstituting the draft. But in fact it's something far worse, and I hope it is just ignored.

According to a summary in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, the report is hot for the idea of Americans' serving the public good at public expense. By the public good, it doesn't mean just the armed forces, and by Americans it doesn't mean just late teenagers: The writers think such a program could well enlist the retired, victims of midlife crisis, displaced homemakers, and others of the idle, unskilled, or directionless. They worry about the negative effects on some—teenaged mothers, for example—but by and large they like the idea of Americans donating a year or two of

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their lives to the State, involuntarily if it comes to that.

The report examines just four possible plans. One would leave service voluntary, just greatly expand the Peace Corps and VISTA and stuff like that. Provide more alternatives, you understand. Since it's a little pricey—say, $2.6 billion, in round numbers—and since it hasn't escaped the authors' notice that the Great Society is on the back burner for the duration, their other three plans involve a little coercion, to bring in community service at below-market prices.

The simplest and probably the cheapest would require high-school seniors to do 240 hours of unpaid service to receive a diploma. The authors say this enterprise would cost a mere $20 million or so, for administration. (Reaganomics means austerity, remember?) But the *Chronicle* article says they believe that even with this bare-bones approach, "opportunities for personal growth would be substantial."

A third plan would reinstitute the draft, make it universal, and offer a choice of two years' active military service, five years in the reserves, or one year of civilian service. (Do these guys live in the same world I do? One year picking up litter in the national parks equals two years of active service in the military? Maybe the press release got the numbers switched.) The report-writers worry that this might violate the 13th Amendment's prohibition of involuntary servitude; why the draft never did that before eludes me.

The last brilliant idea, and the authors' fave rave, is a "universal" program requiring one year of national service from every 18 year old, or the payment of a 5 percent income-tax surcharge in perpetuity. This would "develop more public services than could be offered through any other program," but the authors admit that they don't have a clue how much it would cost. If everyone takes the 5 percent buy-out option it looks like it could be a real money-maker. Of course, we're trying right now to take poor folks off the tax rolls altogether, which would remove their incentive to enlist, so we might wind up with a National Service Corps composed exclusively of young people who expect to make a lot of money some day.

Nobody asked me, but let's start over. Did the Ford Foundation's report-writers ever consider the philosophical objections to compulsory service as anything other than a possible source of "noncooperation"? Maybe they did, and the *Chronicle* just didn't find it worth mentioning. Anyway, for starters, may we take it as axiomatic that we shouldn't force people to donate a substantial part of their lives to the state without compelling reason? That clearly follows from my—and, I would insist, America's—default libertarian assumption that free men and women shouldn't be forced to do *anything* without a damn good reason.

The question then becomes, what is a "compelling" reason? National defense is such a reason—and maybe the only one. Repairing rusty bridges or running inner-city youth programs won't do. And God knows the point of a compulsory program isn't to provide "opportunities for personal growth" (although that might happen). Still with me?

So if a draft is necessary to defend the nation, it's a sad day for the nation, but let's draft, by all means. If it's not necessary for that reason, though, then (*a fortiori*) there's no case for compulsory national service of any sort.

Now, I recognize that the social consequences of our present, all-volunteer force are probably unfortunate. Another Vietnam War would be fought by roughly the same blue-collar boys who fought the last one, with even fewer young urban professionals than before. True, the fact that our soldiery would all be volunteers might buy us peace, if only in the sense of peace and quiet. As soon as the draft was abolished, recall, Vietnam protest backed off from a rolling boil to a simmer. And today's students would undoubtedly be noisier about American involvement in Central America if they believed they might actually have to *go* there. But whether this is a reason to favor an all-volunteer force or to oppose it isn't entirely clear.

And, anyway, it's a side-issue. We're concerned here with whether a draft is necessary for our defense, not whether it would better serve social justice or foreign policy.

I've asked this question of a lot of people who know a lot more about this than I do—which isn't hard. Many say that the expense of our volunteer armed forces is exorbitant, but there we're all entitled to an opinion, and I beg to differ. We ought to be willing to pay what it takes to defend ourselves. No, the question is whether we are paying enough—whether we *can* pay enough—to do that.

What are the military consequences of relying on volunteers? Can they fight modern warfare? Will they? Here, unfortunately, opinions differ. The Pentagon line seems to be: no problem. That it's an official line doesn't mean it's wrong, but there are plenty of junior officers and civilian students of the military who disagree. And among them, there's a good deal of talk about reviving the draft, in some form or other.

One arrangement to be avoided at almost any cost, everyone agrees, is the old system, under which young men who were rich enough or smart enough to stay in school until age 26 didn't have to go to Vietnam. The upshot is that we now have a generation of ministers and tenured academics whose calling was, in many cases, faint. As well as a lot of justifiably ticked-off veterans.

Most advocates of a reinstated draft favor some system of universal service, on grounds of both justice and political good sense. And the idea doesn't outrage public opinion (although that in itself is no reason to do it): 65 percent of adults favor compulsory one-year service; even 58 percent of those 18 to 24.

But if we have to have a military draft, let's do it frankly. Forget the Ford Foundation's plan to smuggle it back in as an alternative to forestry work. If it has to be done, let's have universal military training. If we're going to draft 18 year olds, let's put them all in uniform and let them work out with bayonets.

After basic training, if we don't need all those soldiers (and assuredly we don't), *then* let them do "public service" work—but they should do it in uniform, as soldiers. Nobody says soldiers can't repair roads, teach people to read, assist in public-health clinics. (Alternatively, we could station one every 20 feet along our southern border to interdict drugs and illegal immi-

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